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- It's What Comes Before "Terra Firma" -

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John, in space. "D? Pilot? Can you hear me?" Of course not.

D'Argo stands at *Moya's* Command, with Aeryn and Sikozu at consoles. "Nothing," says D'Argo, and he turns, and walks away.

John looks down, at the American South and South America: "I can't believe I'm gonna die here. It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen."

And D'Argo hears. He stops at door of Command: "John. Where are you?" John hears him over static and responds; D'Argo sighs and looks upwards, relieved. "*Son of a bitch!* How can you hear me?" Everybody stares at D'Argo, Aeryn turns to the windscreen. "I don't know," D'Argo admits. "The wormhole keeps opening and closing." John tells him slowly and carefully to do exactly as John says; Aeryn gives a tiny smile. "Lock onto my voice signal. When the wormhole opens again, follow it." Pilot listens in; D'Argo tells him they're leaving Sikozu and Scorpius aboard while they follow this latest in John's long line of terrible ideas. I love how he's finally got exactly what he wants, but he's going to go ahead and drag everybody down there with him. Chiana follows D'Argo down a corridor, complaining: "You can't leave feckface here!" D'Argo assures her they'll compensate for the general danger and creepiness that surrounds Scorpius: "I'd like you to begin to lock down all the systems." Pilot announces they're powering down and then closes his eyes with a slight sigh. "The rest of us are going after Crichton." Chiana says something ("Shee-yah!") that translates roughly to: "Fucking A." [Because that worked so well last time.](#) I hope they don't pay a horrible price! ...Again!

Lo'La exits *Moya*; D'Argo comms back: "Pilot? I don't see any wormhole out here." John floats above Earth in the *Farscape One*, singing "Five Hundred Bottles Of Beer." Do people ever actually sing that stupid song? Kids, who think they're supposed to. They are wrong. Pilot assures the worried D'Argo that his readings are correct; Aeryn's cool, because she's in love with a chaotic attractor: "Wait for it." Chiana climbs up on the arm of her seat to watch; Noranti and Rygel stare out at the black. This is a *terrible* fucking idea! Like it wasn't bad enough watching everybody die in mixed-up unnatural ways last week! Aeryn watches; a wormhole finally opens directly in front of them. *Lo'La* enters; the crew gets knocked about as she navigates down toward him. Rygel busts hell out of his rubber ass, and they exit. Chiana laughs, joyful, to hear John's voice again over comms: "Six bottles of beer on the wall..." D'Argo checks on everybody; Aeryn grins a bit to herself. "He did it." D'Argo picks John out of the black and comms: "John! We're here! We made it!" John's smile is infectious even over radio: "You're early, I still got a six-pack!" D'Argo comes in behind John and picks him up.

John sits down behind D'Argo, shedding spacesuit, and asks for a radio signal. It's the little lines that tell you how far they've been, all the scars and paranoia that seem so normal until you trade them out into real life: "Coming in clean, John. Nothing's locking onto us." Uh, you're in Earth orbit -- all we've got is a bunch of trash and a Beatles song. "Just need to know what year it is."

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"...On the Senate floor. Commenting from the White House, President Reagan told reporters the situation in Nicaragua had unraveled to such an extent that State Department considered..."

Aeryn smiles at the voice, speaking in English, the language she's learning to love, until she glances over at John. "Reagan was President in the 1980s." Check out the enjambment between these two seemingly contradictory statements, because that's what you call John logic: "Einstein said if I came back before I left, it would screw things up. D, we need to get down there and check it out." Um...can you explain how those concepts connect together? D'Argo's like, "Okay."

Lo'La turns invisible and lands in Florida. John -- this is a good day for John's ass! -- stares at a pickup truck, parked outside a house in a neighborhood lined with palms. Children play in the background. "Home. I can't believe I'm home."

"Touchdown!" A child laughs. John whispers to D'Argo to keep everybody silent and hidden while he checks things out. "Einstein said if there was a problem with the timeline, it would start close to me." Oh, okay. That's right -- just making the trip through the wormhole fucks things up. I forgot that part. Also, it makes no sense, except possibly in the vaguest butterfly way. He touches the hood of the pickup as he walks past, affectionately: "Old Betty." I do love Betty.

"Dad. Dad? You ready?" Jack -- so young! -- agrees, and John's sister, Olivia, capers around. A young man in a trooper uniform sits at the table with Jack, and over it a banner reads: "Congratulations To The *Challenger's* New Captain." John's mother runs out laughing, carrying a cake and congratulating her husband. John stares at her, even more bewildered, as his teenaged self arrives and stands at the table. His name is Johnny, back then. As they engage in part behavior -- Jack telling them they shouldn't have, et cetera -- John stares at the *Challenger* banner. I was seven years old, so I didn't get the right hit off this at first, but I guess if you're an astronaut -- a scientist -- it's one of those horrible touchstones like JFK or Lennon or 9/11. Images of John's mother, laughing and beautiful, his parents in love, alternate with the *Challenger* coming down in white smoke. "D. I don't know how he did it, but my Dad's going up on the *Challenger*." Which he then has to explain: "1986. The *Challenger* space shuttle exploded, killing everyone on board. My dad wasn't on that flight." As Johnny picks up the champagne bottle from the table, John sees the *Challenger* blow up, again and again. Credits.

Back on Lo'La, Rygel's apologizing *if it seems insensitive*, but wonders if, in the scheme of things, whether it really matters if Jack Crichton "flies and dies." Rather than punching him in the box, John answers the question Rygel's really asking: "My father got me started in avionics. No dad, no Farscape project. You stay in Peacekeeper custody, she remains a Nazi," he says, nodding at Aeryn, and "*she* ends up on Nebari Prime," meaning Chiana. Everybody up to speed? Chiana's like, got it: "Now how do we fix this?" John explains that, per Einstein, "the change ripples out from the first mutation," which is the *Challenger* glitch, so if they fix that, "everything else falls back into place." I'm just not smart enough for time travel. "I don't know how long this is gonna take, but I know a place where we might hang out." He also says, producing a newspaper, that they're lucky tomorrow's Halloween. "That's somethin'," he tells the questioning Noranti, "that means you're gonna fit in just fine, Grandma."

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We see an overstuffed mailbox outside a crappy house, and inside, John's holding an awesome photo of a man with some friends, throwing the bird while a space shuttle launches behind him. Behind him, D'Argo comes in, kicking shit and coughing: "The dust on this planet is playing havoc with my sinuses!" Heh. In the living room of the house, Aeryn stares out the front window as Chiana digs through a cardboard box, pulling out clothes. This should go well. ("Shee-yah!" she says again.) John explains the place was the site of a drug bust, and sealed up. "For a while there was some gang kids livin' here." The accent is like at a five right now. Chiana hands John some jeans from the box (see?) and he assures Rygel that this isn't actually his house. "Don't worry. We're only gonna be here for a couple of [hours]." Noranti the picture of the dudes throwing the finger, and Rygel sits on the couch, batting at a plastic shark that weebles at him. He tells the crew to stay hidden, and Aeryn wishes him luck. John, back in normal clothes -- "Hi, guys. This? Leather fascist gear, don't mention it" -- walks in on a fight between Johnny and Jack, and quickly hides. Jack's shouting for Johnny to come back; sister Olivia and another girl, Kim, follow. Mom's yelling at them not to fight in the street. In my family, that goes without saying, but we are not astronauts. Johnny rudely tells his mom to go "check the tarot cards," saying they'll predict Jack is going to walk all over her again. Little Olivia begs him to stop as Jack demands, "And I asked you what I should do!" "And then you did exactly what you wanted," Johnny retorts. Is this how people behave toward their parents in Florida? Mom begs them to go inside, and Johnny tells her to shut up, prompting a quick elbow-grab from Jack. "Don't touch me! Don't you pretend to care what I say to her!" Jesus, this kid. Olivia tells him he's being unfair; she gets the big shut-up as well. I think Johnny is the one that needs to shut up. I don't like seeing this. Not after Xhalax and Talyn; not after *Moya* and Talyn. Kim's horrified. Jack follows Johnny to the truck: "Pal, you're angry with me. So take it out on me, not on them." Johnny slams the truck and gives him the three-finger salute: "Yo! Hero. Read the middle finger." Jack slaps the hand away, rather than taking the fingers ransom like he should. How did it get like this? I'd like to imagine this is because of the *Challenger* ripples, but that would mean invalidating the Karen Shaw thing, so I guess we're stuck with this: John Crichton used to be an asshole.

John agrees, from the bushes, shaking his head and closing his eyes. Johnny speeds away, and Jack joins Mom, herding the girls back inside even as Olivia's begging him to come back. "What the hell is wrong with him?" asks Jack. "He's so damned angry!" But Mom -- Leslie Crichton -- assures him that they both know exactly what the problem is. "Well, I'm gonna make everybody's day. I won't go Monday. I'll go tomorrow, then you can throw another party." Whatever, Jack. Like father, like son. Jack storms back inside, and Leslie grabs poor Olivia. The older girl, Kim, stands in the archway, staring out.

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John looks down the road, throws a tiny salute, and then spots some milk on the doorstep. "God! Milk! Wow!" The taste of home. We're still not dealing with the fact that Leslie's dead: that he's seeing his dead mother, laughing and begging them to be happy. He drinks it [crazily](#) down, and Kim approaches. "What are you doing?" He wipes his mouth and clears his throat. "Just having some milk, Ki -- *Kim*?" She's taken aback: Do I know you?" He introduces himself as "Fred Scarran, from the Gainesville

Scarrans. We're family." She admits that he does look a bit like Johnny. John points down the street with his milk bottle: "I just saw him drive off in Betty. Where's he goin'? The lake?" Kim reminds John that when he got really steamed up, he'd head to the canal. John remembers, rubbing his eyes, and tells her he knows where she means: "I like that spot. You know, with the overhang. The tall trees." Kim's surprised, excited: "That's my favorite place! Johnny hates it there." He stares at her. "Yeah, I know. ...He shouldn't." I love this, so much. He puts the cap back on the bottle and hands it to her: "Milk? Does a body good." He walks away, leaving Kim staring, holding the bottle of milk.

D'Argo is in the dark, talking to the fuse box: "Turn on the lights? Or black out the whole city..." He pulls a lever. Aeryn stares into a light fixture, reading it slowly: "Made...in France?" Suddenly, the bulb bursts into light, and Aeryn shouts, jumping back. D'Argo blows out every light bulb with a pop and crash, but the TV comes on in the living room. "*Look at this studio. It's filled with glamorous prizes...*" Aeryn bends down to look at Vanna White's giant face; Chiana giggles. Rygel grumbles about the TV, still on the couch but now surrounded by empty takeout boxes. "*This sensational twenty-one-thousand-dollar...*" Noranti shows the finger photo to Chiana: "What do you suppose this means?" Chiana decides it's a greeting: "Yeah! To a friend!" Oh, shit. This is another sad one, this whole deal, and I have to recap it for you. Sorry. As Pat and Vanna continue to hawk their shit, Chiana practices, holding up a middle finger at Noranti. "Hello, Wrinkles!" Chiana laughs; Noranti smiles and practices too. You think it's just a dumb joke, you think it's more fart humor. It's not, it never really is. "*Wheel Of Fortoon*," Aeryn practices. "Wheel. Wheel." She grins, and laughs.

John walks across the canal toward Johnny, sitting on Betty's hood. "Nice truck." He touches her, again, and whispers hello: "Betty." Johnny asks who he is; John vaults into the bed of the truck. "My name's John. John Clarence." Angel. "You know, you should go to the overhang more often. Kim likes it there." He puts his palms on the roof and bounces, experimentally. "What the hell are you doing?" He keeps jumping: "Just checkin' your suspension, bra." He looks the kid in the eye. "Need you to do me a favor. You have to talk to your father, I want him not to go up on the shuttle." Johnny tells him to shove off and gets in the truck. John leans in before he can slam the door, grabs the keys, and backs away. Johnny attacks him, and John easily grabs Johnny, holding him against the truck. "Okay, we don't hit. We may shoot people sometimes, but we don't hit." Johnny comes close to calling John a rude word for boys who kiss boys, and then shoves him away. "No, I am not. You got problems. You're gonna outgrow most of 'em. And I know why you're upset." Johnny disagrees, but he proves it: "You think he treats her badly."

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How does he know that? "The same way I know you helped DK cheat on his SATs. You want to go to college, boy? Convince your dad not to fly on the *Challenger*." He tosses the truck keys to Johnny, who gets in and then leans out the window. "You're a spook, right? Come to test the family? 'Cause if you guys knew anything, you'd know I can't convince my Dad to do squat." John tells him he's wrong. "*You're* wrong. He never listens." He speeds off, and John admits Johnny has a point. There comes a point in the journey where you have to go back to the beginning; if you're going to

explain where you are and where you're going, you have to be strong enough to look at where you came from. It's easily the worst part, every time.

A little girl's face. The letter H. A child giggles. Brian Henson discovers lateral marketing. Kermit sings: "H, I, J, K, LMNOP." Aeryn tells D'Argo to study with her: "LMNOP." Just a few words, she says. "Just in case." D'Argo tells her Chiana's already been telling him things: "'Yes.' 'No.' 'Bite me.' That's all I need to know." Heh. Aeryn continues to practice: "R, S... S! *This girl is slow!*" Aeryn is so terrific. She frowns and almost growls at the little girl. Chiana enters, wearing an orange and white striped peasant dress with a low-cut neck. The thing also has ruffles on the cuffs and neck. She's wearing gloves that match. She looks...*awesome*.

"Why are you wearing that?" demands Rygel, and she asks her partner in crime if he's not "busting to get out." Rygel's not interested, basically. There's food here. Chiana: "We're on Earth! Crichton's hometown!" She cocks her head at the door and makes ready to leave. D'Argo cautions her that John told them to stay inside. On the TV, Kermit and the little girl laugh. Aeryn: "...*Again* with the Cookie Monster." Rygel points out that Crichton has now completed the "getting home" part of the show, and that unless Chiana screws it up, they'll probably follow. Not that any of them have a home to go back to. Not really. "I don't want to wait for 'one day.' I want to go exploring now!" That's my girl. D'Argo orders her to stay put, and Aeryn tells them all to shut up while she's watching her stories. "You're not the captain down here," says Chiana petulantly. "It's Halloween! I'll fit in!" So, so true. She pulls back the curtain and takes off, D'Argo following. Aeryn finally gets up and tells him to stay put. D'Argo stares out the window for the next part. Which is sad.

A brunette in a flower-print dress walks past the garage door, just as Chiana skips around the corner; they stop, and stare. Chiana grins, and throws her the finger. The woman stares, confusing Chiana. She walks up, putting the bird right in the lady's grill. The woman, appalled and afraid at this intrusion, stays silent. Chiana gives up, backs away, takes off. The poor woman watches her leave, turns back towards the yard.

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D'Argo and Aeryn stare out the curtain; he shoos her back. D'Argo leaves the room quickly; Aeryn remains behind the curtain. Kermit and the little girl continue to say the alphabet; and Aeryn can't resist another peek. She pulls back the curtain just as the woman's arriving -- they both gasp and jump -- and the woman ducks inside, under Aeryn's arm. Rygel chuckles, drawing her attention, and she wrinkles her nose at him. There's no talking at all, through this whole part, because of the microbes, but it does add a whole lot of tension and texture to the scene. Kermit, the Muppet, narrates the entire thing with the rudimentary building blocks of language -- the bridge that carries you from terror at the alien and into understanding. It doesn't help. It does, however, get you right on board with this poor woman, confronted with the alien nature of our friends for the first time. Just brilliant, and scary, and so off-balance in framing and light. Rygel turns around and stares at the woman's whispered question -- "*What is this?*" -- and laughs in her face. The woman turns around and walks back out, under Aeryn's still-upheld arm. "I love you," the little girl says to Kermit. "I love you too," he replies. "Uh oh," says Rygel. "Give me a kiss!" whispers the little girl. Life fails to imitate art in this instance.

"Pilot," whines Sikoze, up on *Moya*, "there is no need for a complete shutdown. Turn up the heat!" She huddles and chatters in a blanket. Suddenly, Pilot comms to them both, hysterically. "Scorpius! Sikoze, we've got trouble! Get up here! Peacekeeper Marauders are approaching, at maximum speed. Grayza and Braca are aboard." Scorpius orders starburst, but Sikoze demurs: "No. If *Moya* does, she will never find this wormhole's exact location again." And Scorpius completes the thought: the crew will be lost to them. "We must go now!" shouts Pilot, so totally tired of John's wormhole bullshit. "If you run, Grayza will assume Crichton is aboard, and she will hunt you down." Sikoze pauses and looks at Scorpius. "We let Grayza board. She will see Crichton is not here, and she..." Pilot screams: "She will kill me!" Scorpius assures him that if John's gone, she won't hurt them. Scorpius and Sikoze couldn't be uncreepy if they tried, so everything they say comes with the taint of being a total lie, even when it's the truth.

Johnny drives Betty down a street, radio on: *Our true love...* He sees Chiana, in her crazy dress in broad daylight, inspecting a garden gnome, and pulls over, leaning on the window sill. (*Dreams that come and go...*) Chiana stands, dropping the gnome. "Nice outfit," he grins. "Goin' to a party?" Chiana nods, staccato, says one of her words: "Yeah." Johnny asks if she wants a lift, she responds again: "Sure." *You can tell me about the pain you feel*, promises the radio. The thing she hasn't had since she got back to *Moya*, burned and broken and scarred and hurt. The thing that's stood between her and everyone, since her brother rejected her, but especially between her and men. Chiana looks at Betty, then climbs onto the hood -- she's wearing red shoes, white panties -- and Johnny watches her, amazed. Another man stares from across the street as she climbs in through the shotgun window; she chuckles to herself. The radio assumes the *wounds will never heal*, but I wouldn't be so sure. She's smarter than that; so's the universe. She turns it up, so much louder. *Because love is blind...* Johnny asks, as she's dancing, if she likes the music. She laughs and shakes, completely inside herself. *Don't try to change my mind*, the song asks, but that's all she wants. "Cool," nods Johnny, captivated. "So, what's your name?" She tells him, and fiddles with the ashtray. Too afraid to look into his eyes. "Karen?"

Love is blind, says the radio, but that's not exactly true. It's not love that's blind, it's Chiana, when she's taking the moment apart and examining it for what it is. Which is not Chiana today. It's not love that's blind, it's Chiana. Still not looking, only briefly acknowledging him: "Yeah. Karen." The cigarette lighter she pushed pops out, and she examines it. "Shee-yah!" *Because love is blind*. "Karen Shaw, right? The name's John Crichton." *Because love is blind*. She drops the lighter. "Crichton?"

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Hit pause, like Chiana. Facts: The last time we were on Earth, we learned about wormholes; we jumped down them together. John and Aeryn made love as though it were the first time. Chiana has always been attracted to John Crichton, but their love is too intimate, and ordered, for sex. She provides in part the chance for John the chance to be the teacher, after so long spent in amazement and confusion on *Moya*. It would be not only incest but gross misconduct, for him to follow her lead, up there. In 2003. The last time she tried to climb aboard, it was in the Neural Cluster, being ridden by the creature that would bless her with the sight. And she's lost something. Something precious, central to her nature, and she's never had the chance to get it

back, ever since she found her way back to *Moya* again. She's held herself apart from even D'Argo, after giving him so much pain and grief before now. Retreating every time she was asked to give in, grow up, be an adult.

These are facts. Chiana's time off *Moya* has made her something very specific, which is an innocent who has been interfered with. She needs to travel back in time -- back to the beginning, back to the root of the thing that was broken -- if she's ever going to be whole again. Her power has always resided in her innocence and her sexuality, and when she came back to *Moya*, she was powerless. She was blind when it happened, meaning that the one power she does have -- the ability to take the moment apart and look at her place in it, to slow time around her, to employ the split-second pattern recognition of the intuitive -- is useless and terrifying. It asks her to go back to the time she was hurt, at the same time it asks her to [put into thought what she's used to ignoring in intuition](#). It puts her alongside John, who was violated on the Interior planet too, but in a way they can't ever look at, or talk about, or touch. Maybe if she could have found Jothee again, a younger version of D'Argo (half Luxan; half Sebacean, like John for all intents and purposes), she could have found her way back to D'Argo again. Back to herself. But that involves usurping the agency of another person, and it's something she's already screwed up once.

Take a teacher, a brother, the softest man you've ever met. The man who sees your heart, and whose heart you see. The one person you can never sleep with, because it would break all the fibers you've got left -- but the one person who could prove to you, remind you, that it doesn't hurt. And with a little judicious time travel, you might find yourself in a position where everybody wins. It will hurt to make the choice, it will be scary as shit, as shee-yaw, but it's the choice the universe is handing you. You wouldn't be able to make a sound, because he wouldn't understand your voice. But it's not your speech he needs to understand, because it's always been the child inside him that loved you. And once those children were hurt, and broken, and invaded? Take it backwards. This could only happen in a science fiction show, and there are those of us who could be jealous of that. But it happens, and there's grace in it. Take this man, this young version of the man you love most purely, and see him for what it is: the chance at grace they took from you. You could fall in love with that so easily. And he'll become a man, and you'll finally get to be a woman. Whole.

Play. "What's the matter?" Johnny asks her. And she makes a deal with herself, shaking, nodding her head. She knows she can do this. She knows she has to. "It happens all the time," the radio assures us, "because love is blind." She touches his arm. "Drive." She mimes turning the steering wheel, becomes more insistent: "*Drive*." Just because it happens every day, to every person, doesn't make the jump any less momentous, or any less terrifying. Other people's bodies are the scariest thing in the world until you've done it before. "It happens all the time," says the radio, "it's not a crime. Because love is blind." Johnny starts the truck, and Karen Shaw gives a joyous shout as they take off down the street.

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A Florida state trooper parks in the driveway where the crew is hiding; the trooper turns off the car and heads toward them. Inside, D'Argo's watching from the window: "Looks like an enforcer. He has a weapon." Aeryn enters wearing a ridiculous, yet awesome, outfit: a bared midriff surrounded by blue and purple flowers, bell-bottomed

hip-huggers and bell sleeves. She looks like the Sock It To Me girl. She tosses him a blue football jersey. Rygel advises that Aeryn knows enough English to get them through this. "Plan doesn't work, we use force," says D'Argo, and goes to change. "It'll be fine," Aeryn sighs, and then gasps at the trooper's knock. She peeks out at him, then opens the door, closing it behind her. "Hello." He touches the brim of his hat: "Ma'am." She asks how she can help him, and he looks around at the house. "Well, this house was..." She nods, looking up at it as well. "Abandoned. By our uncle." She invites him in, and opens the door for him after an awkward moment. Rygel gasps at him from the couch as they enter; Noranti's wearing something around her head, like a sock or something, a dishtowel, and she's "reading" a menu, upside down. The door creaks ever so creepily as it closes.

The trooper starts to explain about the complaint he's received; D'Argo listens, from behind a doorway, wearing the jersey over his robes, holding the Qualta at attention. Aeryn nods again. "From the lady. Yes, I think she was scared." She reaches over the back of the couch and picks up Rygel: "She saw Kermit." She tosses him onto the floor. "We thought the batteries were dead, but...it's just a silly toy." Rygel lands on his back, mouth and eyes wide open. Noranti belches loudly; Aeryn tells "Grandma" to say excuse me (oh, right, third eye -- took me a sec), and she looks up. The trooper gets more suspicious. "Okay, where are you from?" D'Argo sneezes behind him, and sneezes again as Aeryn stalls, entering the room. The trooper turns and pulls his gun on him: "Whoa, whoa, whoa! Don't move, pal!" Aeryn tries to explain -- aww -- that D'Argo's her brother. "It's Halloween, remember?" says Noranti, ever so helpfully. Aeryn smiles and nods, nervously. "He's dressed up," says Noranti. "In a mask." How's she know English? Aeryn assures him it's a mask indeed, and the trooper asks if D'Argo's not just a bit too old for Halloween costumes. D'Argo sternly informs him that he is not, the trooper keeps the gun on him. "No?" He shrugs, trying to think of his vocab; Aeryn closes her eyes, appalled. "Uh, bite...me?" The trooper orders him to take off the mask, now fully engaged.

Commercial. D'Argo heads toward the trooper, Qualta held high. Aeryn steps between them, promising it's just a toy sword, and as the trooper's telling her to bug off, Noranti blows some powder in the guy's face. He sinks to the floor in her arms. "There is no danger here," she whispers. "See D'Argo remove his mask. See the *hooman* you expect. Then go, and leave us alone." All right, Granny! He opens his eyes and sees D'Argo remove his face, revealing a young, quite tall black guy. "Is there a problem, Officer?" The trooper gets to his feet, still disoriented. "No problem. I'll just...go, man, and you guys just...you know, do your own thing." He goes to the door, Noranti wishes him a happy Halloween. Aeryn closes the door behind him with a friendly smile. Under a pizza box, on the floor, Rygel groans. "You bitch! I think you broke a rib." He groans again. Aeryn tells him to shut up and he gasps, insulted. "Well, we've done it now. I'll have to go and find Crichton." She and Captain D'Argo look at each other. There's a world of difference between taking orders from a PK Commandant and from the elected Captain. It's so small, but so neat.

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Aeryn walks down the street on the curbside grass, hearing children play, still wearing the ridiculous drag queen pantsuit. A ball rolls towards her and she stoops and picks it up. She looks at it, then tosses it back to a boy with a baseball mitt on his hand.

"Thanks, ma'am," says the boy. John joins her and they walk together. "Oh, man. Like those clothes," he grins. She hopes they're okay. "It's all we could find." He admits she looks a bit like Cher. "Is that a good, or a bad thing?" The important thing is, the look works. Aeryn asks how things are going with the Crichtons. "Situation normal: it's getting worse. Now my dad's leaving tomorrow."

Leslie Crichton sits with her back to the street, laying out a tarot spread, as John and Aeryn walk past. He slows down, looking, as Aeryn keeps walking, head down. John hurries to catch up, as Olivia comes out and approaches Leslie. John and Aeryn crouch at a fence, John signaling for silence, as Olivia says she's going to visit a friend, and they say goodbye. Aeryn steadies herself on John's thigh, watches him shake and bit his lip. He finally speaks, as she looks into his eyes. "That's my mother. She died four years before I left. Now I'm gonna talk to her." She clasps his hand in hers and lovingly gives him a tiny smile in support.

"Excuse me, ma'am," says John, entering the garden. He and his mother stare at each other. "Do I know you?" No. He squints and squirms, nervous and hurting. "Um, you read the cards?" She nods and admits it silly. "Everybody thinks it is, especially my son." John shakes his head: "It's not. He's wrong. He's just young." John grins at his mother. "It's not silly." She smiles back, laughs quietly. "It's a little strange, but...that's why I'm here. I did a reading in Gainesville, and I...saw your husband."

John Crichton, Seer of Seeings and Reader of the Cards. He's so weird. "Jack?" Yes. He begs her to keep his father home, until Monday. "I did a reading," she murmurs. It's *Farscape*. If you buy *Moya* and Karen Shaw and wormholes, is it really so far to jump? Zhaan and Stark and...this is John's mother. Of course she reads tarot. "God," she breathes. "Is there something?" John says he doesn't know. "Don't let him go this weekend." He looks away, biting it back: "Don't...back down, like you always do." The anger in that, and the frustration, and the pain. The way he always asks you to look at the thing you don't want to look at. "How do you know that?" He says it's in her face: "You're a peacemaker, not a fighter. Look, just, uh, don't let him go." He finally gives in, to the sadness, and starts to run away. "I'm sorry I bothered you." She asks again if she knows him, and he turns at the gate. "No. You don't know me." The gate clanks shut quietly behind him.

"It even brought tears to my eyes," says a woman on TV, like she just saw the last scene. Which was rough. But no, she's surrounded by dolls, reading a letter, as Aeryn watches. Rygel advises John to just tell Jack about the crash, and then "he won't go on the scuttle"; John corrects him, and assures them that Jack won't believe him, and things will just get worse. D'Argo asks what he wants to do, and John sighs, because this is another horrible plan. Like, such a bad idea that it's funny. "Seventeen years ago, I got trapped in a fire. I was in a coma for two days. My dad saved me. Afterwards, when NASA called, he refused to leave." Noranti realizes that he's wanting to recreate the situation. "I'll get my old girlfriend to bring my...*self*...here. We'll make sure my Dad saves me, light a fire..." Noranti offers to help with drugs: "I can simulate a coma, so..." But John holds up his hands. "No no no no, Grandma. You do not touch my body..." He stops; you smile. "*Where's Chiana?*" I love that.

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Chiana sits in the truck, facing Johnny now. "We used to get along. We did stuff. Now he just thinks we're...part of his crew, or something." She sighs, says a word she

knows: "Fathers." He asks if she's had trouble with hers. That is an understatement. She smiles, sighing again. A plane roars overhead as Johnny admits that he actually would like to follow his father's lead, and become an astronaut. "You will," she assures him, and he shakes his head, laughing. "No, it's too tough. It's a total bitch. They only take the best." She just watches him, and he thinks it out. She leads him to another wormhole. "I don't know, maybe. One day." Heaven for everyone.

The trooper from before gets out of his car again. He circles around toward the back, past some bushes, and climbs up to look over the fence. "Hello, Cookie Monster!" says Noranti, who has appeared out of nowhere, across the fence. She smiles and blows powder in his face; he goes down.

Later, Noranti's got him tied to a chair in an abandoned swimming pool in the backyard. There's a TV with a lamp on top of it sitting before of him on the cement. Noranti leans around him, holding a metal dipper to his mouth. He swallows loudly as D'Argo arrives at the edge of the pool, staring down. "What are you doing?" he demands, and she explains, sort of. "He was snooping. I'm running tests to make sure I don't hurt Crichton if I put him into a coma. Look!" She twists the trooper's ear wicked bad. "He doesn't blink! I can do anything to him. He doesn't feel a thing!" She's so cool. D'Argo reminds her that they're supposed to be actively not making things worse: "Get him out of there."

Noranti and D'Argo try to stuff the unconscious trooper into the backseat of his squad car, but he's very floppy. The neighbor lady from before comes out to watch them.

D'Argo climbs into the driver's seat -- oh, this is not good -- and puts on the trooper's helmet, saying to himself, "Helmet." The trooper groans, falling half out of the car and onto the paving. Noranti grabs him and yanks him back inside. "Machine," says D'Argo. "Go!" Nothing happens. Noranti leans in beside D'Argo's head, indicating the key. He slaps her hand away and tells her to mind her beeswax, but turns the key. The engine starts. "Okay. Prepare for engagement." There's no reason for this to be so funny, but it is. They back out, squealing, and hit some garbage cans. The neighbor jumps back, but then when D'Argo stops moving, she comes to his door. "Excuse me!" Flustered, he waves his middle finger at her. She blinks at him, thrown off again. He breathes out, loudly, and then begins to drive forward, in fits and starts. The unconscious trooper in the back lolls around, slack and gone. The neighbor watches them take off.

A Peacekeeper Marauder lands in *Moya's* hangar; a squad of Peacekeepers, including Braca and Grayza, march on Pilot's den. "Activate the control collar," says Braca, and Pilot begs him to leave it out, on *Moya's* behalf. "Please. We didn't try to run." The PKs ignore him; Braca climbs over the console toward Pilot. Pilot is terrified, stammering: "We didn't st...starburst. I told you, I...I have no idea where Crichton is!" Braca smiles. Grayza: "Braca, if Crichton is aboard this Leviathan, bring him to me." Braca agrees, and orders a full tier search. "I'll start in the Neural Cluster." He smirks at Pilot and climbs down onto the floor.

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Full moon on Halloween. I like this part: John comes into the bolthole's living room, where Rygel is laughing uproariously, and sits next to him on the couch. Rygel is stabbing a pumpkin with a knife, over and over and over. John sighs, informing everyone that he and Kim have arranged a meeting at the canal tomorrow. He puts

his hand sweetly on Rygel's head and asks what the hell the deranged little freak is doing. "Cutting. Just cutting! Make them scary, you said. Scary! Ah!" He continues stabbing, stabbing, stabbing. This is by far the coolest flavor of Rygel you ever get to see. John reaches gingerly into the pile of wrappers at Rygel's side, and pulls out a piece of chocolate: "Somebody got a sugar high. You been stealin' candy, Mr. Burroughs?" Rygel shakes and twitches: "Ohh, Crichton! How illegal is this dren? You've gotta get me more! I don't care what it costs!" John tells him to breathe. "Buckwheat, breathe." He takes the knife out of Rygel's hand, but Rygel keeps making stabbing motions with his hand. I love him. "Get some sleep, we've got a big day tomorrow." He pats Rygel on the head and leaves him talking to himself. "Okay. Okay. Good idea." Rygel stares at his still-quivering hand.

Neural Cluster: Sikozu, still wrapped in her blanket, advises Scorpius that they should hide in the neural turbines. "They will hide our heat signatures." Scorpius tells her to go, but she's insistent: "Scorpius, we must hide until the Peacekeepers have gone!" He tells her he'll be all right, and she measures his face for a moment, then turns and leaves.

Scorpius listens to Braca: "Check tier nine. I'll go below." He moves behind a pillar, and watches Braca climb down into the Cluster. Scorpius growls loudly, just behind Braca, who turns and sees him, quickly around toward a pillar, hiding his face. "You're dead!" Scorpius hisses, and steps closer. "How many aboard the Leviathan, Braca?" Thirty plus Grayza, Braca tells him without hesitation. Scorpius steps still closer: "Will they follow you down here?" No. Scorpius reaches out and grabs Braca by the shoulders, turning him and grabbing, not to say caressing, his face, and staring into his eyes. He pulls him in and...kisses him on the forehead. Better luck next time, Milko. "Well done," Scorpius smiles, and Braca reaches out, putting his hands tightly, not to say tenderly, on Scorpius's cheeks: "It's good to see you, sir." Then they totally make out!

But we've already cut to the next scene! Cheerful birdsong outside the drug den. "Good morning, Florida! I hope you're having a very scary Halloween," the radio continues, and the guy makes a lot of dumb noises. Outside, the trooper's on his back, on the ground, saying hello to his chief, who's none too impressed. "We've been looking for you all night," he says, and we pull back to see another trooper and that nosy neighbor lady, standing next to the cruiser, with its door open. "I saw you with them," she says, and the trooper wriggles, trying to get his legs out of the car. There's an open liquor bottle on the street next to him. Another neighbor watches from behind a tree. "I don't know what you saw, Dot, but I think I need a warrant." The Chief helps him up off the pavement.

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Everyone's gathered in the living room, D'Argo explaining procedure. "The charges are almost ready. They'll create more smoke than fire. Your father'll have a quarter of an [hour] to get you out." Aeryn sighs. "I'll set a perimeter, make sure we're not interrupted." She gets off the couch as Noranti joins John: "I've made enough syrup to keep the kid unconscious for three [hours]. Oh, don't worry, I've tested it on the enforcer so the boy won't wake in the middle of the rescue." John's not sold on the drug stuff, of course. "We'll see. I'll go get my...self, and I'll be right back."

John and Chiana crawl through some weeds outside the Crichtons'. They watch as Jack bends over Leslie, kissing her forehead. "Mmm, you smell nice!" She thanks him and they smile at each other. He sits near her at the table; she takes his hand. "Well, what do the cards say?" She assures him he's definitely staying. She laughs and kisses his hand. In the bushes, John wonders at how happy they are, whispering: "I didn't see my parents like that very often." Leslie tells him to pick a card, they laugh. "I never saw that in my sires," says Chiana. She puts his head on John's shoulder, where it belongs. Where she couldn't rest, before Earth. Leslie laughs at her husband as he pretends to read the card he's drawn: "...Definitely going!" They laugh and play with the cards; John shakes his head. "You just want 'em to stay like that...they think they've got all the time in the world, but pretty soon it's doctors, tests..." Jack takes another card: "Well, this one isn't too bad!" Chiana and John leave.

Johnny stands on the bank, throwing rocks into the canal; Kim sits up in Betty, fixing her hair. John crouches around the truck, hiding from Johnny, and gets inside with Kim. She smiles, happy to see him; they have an easy, almost flirty rapport. It's cool, not weird. "Hi. I did what you told me. Johnny doesn't want to be here, but I told him we had to talk. He thinks I'm breaking up with him." John murmurs to himself, "Well, you will." She asks him what he said. "Nothing. He's just...you know, a girl like you..." Kim asks if he's flirting with her, and he gets flustered, and of course Chiana appears. "Hey!" Kim turns to look at her and Chiana immediately knocks her out. I love this. Chiana giggles; John's horrified. "Why the hell did you do that?" Chiana shrugs -- "We're in a hurry" -- and looks down at Kim, sniffing; jealous of Johnny. "So, this is what...you're into." John protests that Kim's a nice girl, and Chiana laughs and asks if he'll take Kim so she can be in charge of Johnny. No questions asked.

Some kids knock on the door, which is open behind the curtain. Rygel sits on the couch, back to the door. "Trick or treat! Trick or treat! Trick or treat!" the kids scream, and Rygel invites them in. "Over here." A skeleton, a pirate, and a vampire enter the room. "Trick or treat, money or eats," says the pirate, and Rygel laughs. The skeleton approaches Rygel with bag held out. "Cool toy," he says, and reaches out to touch Rygel's mouth. Rygel opens his eyes and mouth, growling loudly, and the three kids take off screaming like hell. Rygel growls and then laughs madly and the kids cry to their moms. The skeleton drops his bag on the couch and all three kids scream and run out of the house. Rygel continues to growl and laugh as John comes in past the screaming kids. He grabs the bag from Rygel and tells him to cut it out. "But I love this! And you won't buy me any more! I want a Kit-Kat and M&M's and Pez and Reese's Pieces. All for me!" John takes off with the bag, ignoring him. "D? You all set?" Smoke comes from the fuse box, where D'Argo's setting the last charge.

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Noranti sits outside in the swimming pool, stirring a kettle on Halloween. Chiana comms to ask -- stammering -- how much longer the serum's going to take. Noranti says it'll be at least thirty and asks if Chiana can "keep him occupied." She says she'll think of something, and Noranti rolls her eyes and smiles: "I'm sure you can. Hmm." Anybody else, I'd think they were calling her a slut, but it's Granny. I'm sure she knows the whole story already.

Karen Shaw climbs down off Betty's roof, down into the truck bed, where Johnny lies. "Okay," she says. To him, to herself. She straddles him. "Garage," they agree. She

leans her forehead against his, distracting herself with his jacket buttons. "Is this, uh...your...f...first?" He nods. "Is this how you...you imagined...it?" He looks up at her. "Not in Betty. I always thought it'd be in my Dad's four-wheel drive." They kiss. Karen pushes Johnny's jacket back, down off his shoulders.

Neural Cluster. "Does Grayza know you're my spy?" Scorpius asks. "No, but she'll figure it out when she discovers you're alive." Um, like you just did? Scorpius tells him Grayza must never know he's alive. "We've got to stop her!" says Braca. "She's organizing a peace initiative with the Scarrans!" Scorpius hisses, saying they're just using her. "They'll agree to everything, then betray us when their forces are battle-ready." He tells Braca to stall her. "I'm not given to exaggeration, but...the future of Peacekeeper survival depends on you."

The trooper and his chief, warrant in hand, head toward the house.

Johnny sits in a stuffed chair in the drug house, watching TV. Looking kinda sleepy. Noranti creeps into the room to Chiana, watching him from behind a pillar. "You can do this?" she asks, handing Chiana a glass. "No problem. Just make sure everyone stays out of sight until he drinks it." She kneels beside him, smiling. "Hey," they say. "Here," she says, handing him the glass. He drinks it and she takes his hand. "It's okay?" He smiles at her. "Yeah."

Over the TV you could barely hear the squad car returning. Aeryn enters from the back, wearing black under her long coat: "We've got trouble. Two enforcers." John darts a finger at Chiana -- "Stay down!" -- and heads for the window, freaking Johnny out. "Hang on! You're that guy that..." The stuff gets him and he drops. John tells Chiana to keep him down as he goes into shock, then seizure. She bends over him: "Crichton? Crichton!" Aeryn and John check it out. "Old Woman!" he swears to himself. "I thought she tested this stuff." Chiana and John hold onto Johnny, jerking and gasping, scared out of their minds. "Is this supposed to be happening?" asks Chiana, as Noranti hurries in. John feels Johnny's jugular: "No pulse. I've got no pulse!" He stares at Noranti as the police knock at the front door. "Open up!" Chiana tries to get John's attention, finally pointing out that his arm is going Marty McFly before their very eyes. Even as the police are demanding entry, everybody's staring at John as he vanishes.

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Commercial. To the sound of the police bashing at the door, D'Argo runs in, asking after Crichton. Who is now completely invisible. Noranti tells him to chill: "Everything's under control." John begins to shout. "I'm [gone](#)! What happens next? I lose my voice?" (Um, ouch?) Aeryn, from the door: "I wish. Keep your voice down." Heh. Noranti figures out that the sheriff probably outweighed Johnny by more than she thought. John and Aeryn beg her to just get it together and bring John back, but she just points at Johnny: "His body has stopped functioning, and you are ceasing -- wherever you are -- to exist." I guess you've gotta have this in a time-travel story, if you visit your younger self. I was happy just with the Karen Shaw stuff. This is an extra act where no extra act needs to be. It's such a good episode. Aeryn finally allows as how they need to let the cops in. "...Let's open it up now." She and Chiana nod to each other, and Noranti pops something nasty in her mouth and starts chewing. D'Argo agrees to take the larger of the cops, Aeryn pushes back the curtain and opens the door, smiling brightly: "Hello!" They walk in, nodding at her; D'Argo

slams the sheriff face-first into a wall, as Aeryn punches the trooper in the gut, dropping him.

"Grandma," says John's voice. "Fix me." She chews calmly, addressing the empty space: "You're just a nookie!" Heh. "Haven't you ever died before?" she asks, approaching Chiana and tapping in. She kneels down over Johnny's face, and spits a long wad of something into his mouth. Aeryn just about pukes, but whatever. It's Noranti. You burnt out your barf threshold with her a long time ago. I actually like how nasty she is: she's the opposite of Zhaan in even that way. Noranti covers Johnny's mouth with hers, and Aeryn gets worried, running over to them. I like how, even though she's actually had to sit through John dying, Aeryn's not actually all that concerned about Johnny. Just fix it. Johnny breathes, John stares at his hands coming true again, and Johnny passes out. Noranti's like, "See?" but John still doesn't feel completely de-McFlyed. Noranti hopes it'll pass -- covering that she didn't want to bring Johnny back too quickly -- but maybe he should use it to his advantage somehow.

Rygel watches the trooper crawling around; he begs Rygel: "Who are you people?" Noranti hunkers down, third eye glowing pink. "Aliens!" The trooper looks from her to D'Argo, who tongues him. The guy falls back against the wall and D'Argo gets ready to set all the smoke charges. "Right. Let's get 'em into the garage." She picks up Johnny. Aww.

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Leslie Crichton sits at a table in the garden, shuffling cards and humming sweetly in the sun. A shadow passes over her face; she feels it, and looks up. A hand caresses her cheek and she puts her hand over it, still humming. "Mom," says John. "It's me." She stares out into the sun. "Johnny?" She almost smiles, feeling him with her. "I love you. I've wanted to tell you that for a very long time." You can almost see him. "What's the matter?" Leslie says, forcing herself to look down, at the cards, figure out much of this is happening and how much is madness; what she has to do next. "I'm in trouble, I'm in the Carson house. Get Dad and tell him to save me." Leslie throws the cards down, hurries through the garden toward the house, screaming Jack's name. "Mom, listen! When you first feel the pain, don't...don't wait." She's gone. She was always gone. He becomes visible again, losing even the tinge of the supernatural that could have saved her; separating himself from Johnny again for good. He becomes a man you can see; he becomes a man.

"The initial scans were accurate," Braca lies. "The Leviathan is empty." He and Grayza are accompanied down the corridor by a few PKs. "I assumed as much," she replies smugly. "I accessed the memory banks, the Pilot has no idea where Crichton's gone." And then she orders something curious. "Braca, prepare the Marauders. Set course for our meeting with the Scarrans." They take off, Braca and the soldiers, and Grayza's left alone. A creature has appeared in the doorway: the muscled corpse of a lizard man, all eyes and teeth. She's used creeps like this before. "There's no way that *Moya* can detect your presence," she explains, but the Skreeth has Crichton's DNA, so it should be able to detect him. "So when he returns, as we know he will, capture him alive." The creature looks down the corridor and snarls. DNA, really? Again. How much of this show is about Crichton's DNA? But also, how about this: *IF SHE*

ALREADY HAS HIS DNA THEN -- PER THE COCKADOODIE SCARRANS -- SHE'S ALREADY GOT WORMHOLES.

Noranti hurries to Johnny, laid across Betty's tailgate, and blows yet new powder in his face: "Remember nothing." She hurries away, and Chiana whispers in his other ear, "Except for Karen Shaw, in the four-wheel drive." Heh. I guess the whole gray-girl aspect was just a bit too straining of credulity, and maybe they're right. You remember everything. D'Argo has the smoke going; Noranti's giving the Sheriff the whole "Remember nothing," but then Chiana grabs her and pulls her out of the house before she can give the trooper the same treatment.

Now there's just an assload of smoke coming out of the boarded-up house; D'Argo drags the trooper out by the pits and into his car -- face down in the Sheriff's lap, behind the wheel. Oh, D'Argo. Aeryn notifies him that everyone's back on the ship, and Jack's on his way to save Johnny. The two of them -- male and female sides to John's virility -- hide and watch as John's father investigates the fire; John approaches and notes his Dad "moves fast for an old guy!" D'Argo congratulates him on his corporeality; Dot the Nosy Neighbor appears, and John spots her over the fence. "Damn. She's going to screw things up. My dad has to do it by himself." From the rattlers to the Ancients, it's always been about John waiting for his dad to prove it. "Aeryn!" he hisses. Tellingly. She tosses herself over the wall onto the sidewalk.

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Inside, Jack's screaming -- not for "Johnny," but for John -- as Dot comes upon the policemen's tÃ¢te-Ã -tÃ¢te. Aeryn creeps up behind her.

Inside the house, Jack knocks himself out on a chandelier; outside the house, Dot knocks herself out on Aeryn's fast-moving fist. The door is open, smoke pouring out. "You know," says D'Argo, "if he stays in there too much longer, it's gonna catch on fire. Why do our plans never work?" John says "Murphy's Law," but I think he means, "My plans are hilariously horrible but always work out." John spots his dad knocked out on the floor and calls for D'Argo. "I'm gonna get myself. You take Dad." John for Johnny, D'Argo for Jack, Aeryn for everything else in the world. John hurries to the garage as D'Argo kneels beside Jack; Jacob starts scribbling messy diagrams about everybody and everybody else.

D'Argo drags Jack into the garage and confirms that John's still solid. John looks down at Johnny, lying on Betty's gate. D'Argo opens the garage door, drags Jack out onto the grass. John caresses Johnny's forehead, kissing him softly. "Try not to frown so much. Good luck." John picks up Johnny and carries him out of the garage. He saves himself.

"We've gotta go," grunts D'Argo. "I'll start *Lo'La*." John reluctantly agrees and lays Johnny down, on the grass, near Jack. He glances at Jack and leaves them, father and son -- and runs straight for Aeryn.

There are sirens; Jack wakes up and sees Johnny beside him. His son coughs, and he tells him to hold on. Leslie screeches up and runs to them; Jack begs Johnny to speak. Jack assures Leslie he's going to be okay; Kim joins them. Complete. Aeryn tells John, who is being very quiet, that it's probably time to go. Kim worries about Johnny, Aeryn takes off. Jack looks up at John, notices him, takes a step forward. John leaps to the top of the wall, looking down at his father, the hero. Then he's gone. Jack turns slowly back to face his family. This show is fucking awesome.

Trooper man sits behind a painted mirror, begging them to believe: "I swear to God I'm tellin' the truth. There was this guy, and he was invisible. And this other thing that had this long tongue. Uh, he knocked me out with it." Behind the glass [Mulder and Scully](#) watch, disbelieving. "They left this!" He puts his hand on Rygel's horrific pumpkin, on the table before him. "As a sign!" Scully shakes her head at Mulder and they take off. "Like a message or somethin'. 'Cause nobody human coulda made it!" Rygel has carved out Scorpius's face onto the pumpkin. "There's no way a human coulda made this." Fingers crossed.

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Lo'La flies back toward *Moya*; D'Argo asks if they can save the *Challenger* crew, and Noranti cuts that idea dead. Pilot calls to them. "Where are you?" asks John, and the reply is simple and lovely: "Where you said to be." D'Argo can't find *Moya* with his scanners; John realizes it's a timeframe issue. "What year is it where you are?" 2003. They follow the connection to Pilot through the wormhole. "By Lannit! Another Earth!" exclaims Rygel. But it's still the same one, even though it's always different. *Moya's* the difference; they dock.

Lo'La's steps lower; John's the first to exit. He steps through the hangar doors, confronted by three human men, and a woman. The man is his father. John looks at them quietly, gone so still. Jack clears his throat, on the edge of tears. Grown old (-ish) in a moment. "W... welcome home, son. We've been waitin' for you. A long time." It's the first time we've seen him since [the premiere](#); we've drawn lines and mirror images of him, but we haven't seen him yet again for real. This is homecoming; after John loves the Ancient Jack, after John saves Johnny, after he jumps into wormholes, only then is he allowed to see Jack again. Of course he doesn't buy it. Jack walks forward and his son pulls a pulse pistol. Jack asks what's wrong. He's not seen his son tempted, disappointed, brought again and again to hope only have it dashed. He's not seen his son weep for all the death that's surrounded him; doesn't understand a soldier's readiness. He sees only his son, lost forever, now coming home. Love and relief. Of course John doesn't buy it.

John, eyes trained on Jack's: "Was it a bass? Or a trout?"

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<http://www.televisionwithoutpity.com/show/farscape/terra-firma/>

- Trout -

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Previously on *Farscape*, only people who had seen "[A Human Reaction](#)," which aired like four and a half years ago, knew what John meant when he asked his father, "Was it a bass, or a trout?" I guess Sikoze is one of them though, because she immediately tries to confirm for John that the DRDs confirmed their visitors: three men, including John's father Jack, and a lady. At whom John's got his pulse pistol pointed. Jack: "It's me, son. It's all right, you're home. You're alive. And, if that wasn't miracle enough, this ship is actually a living organism?" John assures him she is, and when Jack starts asking if Sikoze's "another alien life-form," to which the correct answer is always "You have no fucking idea," but then you also have to mention how shitty her hair looks in *The Peacekeeper Wars*, and it's a whole thing, so John changes the subject to how the hell they managed to get to *Moya*.

Jack explains that IASA sent a shuttle "to open up communications" and then freaked out when Sikozu finally answered...*in English*. John lowers his gun and casts a tired, mean look at Sikozu: "She's too smart." One of the other guys introduces himself:

"T.R. Holt, Special Advisor to the President." Holt congratulates John on accomplishing "Earth's first contact with extraterrestrial life," John laughs and calls down D'Argo and Aeryn from Lo'La. Aeryn, of course, immediately goes for her gun, because she is awesome, and John tells the humans to stay frosty. D'Argo stares at them with his arms crossed, and Holt gapes at him. Chiana, Noranti, and Rygel all cluster near Aeryn and D'Argo, staring back at Jack's team. Aeryn's played this game before; she looks scared out of her wits. ...Well, for Aeryn.

John steers Sikozu away for a short meeting -- she's totally adorable throughout this scene, by the way, just overjoyed at all the hubbub and new people -- and she asks what took him so long. It's been 42 days since his vacation in the land of Nagel and skateboards. "The wormhole's unstable; some time dilation may have occurred," John explains, and Sikozu tells him Scorpius is in a pod at the other end of the wormhole, transmitting breadcrumbs. "Yeah, you can stop pimping for him anytime," John snits. Sikozu asks what the hell his problem is -- "These are your people, do you think they pose us a threat?" -- and maybe two or three years ago that was a possibility. Now? "No. It's the other way around." Credits.

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John watches the sun come up in a mostly clear sky, sitting at a dock and staring into space. Unused fishing tackle sits near him on the dock as he muses about how weird it is being back on Earth after all this time wanting to come home, how seeing his family and friends again is so weirdly normal. We see him in a large hanger, scientists everywhere, on a tour with Holt and Holt's toupee. DK's new wife Laura grabs him, and DK comes up as well, grinning: "Married on a boat in Naples. Wish you could have been there." John teases the woman: "You said he was a geek!" She agrees he still is, everybody's cute, everybody laughs.

"I figured Earth would freak out," John continues on the dock, "And it's delivered in spades, on time, thirty minutes or less." A small army of press surge toward *Farscape 1* and Lo'La, trying to get to John and D'Argo. "Uncle Sam is keeping the aliens safe and contained. A waterfront mansion for their personal use, with full security team standing by." Moya's crew file toward it, led by Holt and S.S. agents. "It's a cage, but at least it's a gilded one." It's a pretty awesome house, actually, but it's not like Merv Griffin awesome, as gilded cages go. Entering, Noranti grabs a flower arrangement and chows down, assuring Chiana that it's delicious. Sikozu takes a bite of an apple and immediately spits it on the floor. Chiana giggles and stretches on the couch while Aeryn checks out the fireplace.

"Of course, the suits are more interested in the technology, no surprise there, so we let 'em look." John advises a group of nerds on proper pulse pistol maintenance; one of them tries at target practice and accidentally blows out several computers, for some reason, causing people to jump. "They just can't comprehend what they're looking at, much less replicate it." John's journal is a very interesting mix of alien and English, which is...John's got beautiful handwriting. It looks like a Tolkien appendix. Some of them are accepting translator microbes, and we see D'Argo speaking Luxan at a man who's getting injected by a DRD, slowly fading into English. Neat. "But even translator

microbes aren't gonna help some people listen. Not that you can blame them." D'Argo looks up from the old guy and yells at a man approaching Lo'La -- he touches the forcefield and gets bounced, screaming. Eyes are rolled.

This is a funny little episode, by one Richard Manning -- it's chock-full of little handjobs for the faithful, but also tells a whole story that's central to the mythos. As a quasi-critic you have to roll your eyes -- Caroline's sainthood, Jack's abrupt turnaround -- but speaking as one of those wide-eyed faithful, it rocks. "At least the alien life's not going too crazy." Which would be relative to what exactly? Chiana and Sikozy get their hotness on lounging by the pool, and for once the show gives us a hint of mercy: instead of strapping on a two-piece, Noranti's futzing around with a barbeque grill. Aeryn opens the gate for John's sister, Olivia, who's carrying a cooler. John tells us that his family's been hanging out and helping the aliens, as Olivia offers to bring Aeryn some clothes. She looks down at her leather and thanks her. My friend Andy always said that it was too bad for [Buffy](#) because no matter how well she got her shit together, she'd never be fit for human company; not sure I agree, but he said the same thing applies to John and Aeryn: They can never rest. And I always think of this moment with the leather when I think about that. The walking wounded and the war-scarred incomprehensible.

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"And my cousin Bobby. Bobby is totally fascinated by the ETs." Or more specifically, Chiana and Sikozy in bikinis, whom Bobby is videotaping. Chiana puts down her magazine and gives him the finger with a grin, then turns to Sikozy. "Hey, I got this great idea. How 'bout we break outta here and go make some new friends?" Sikozy reminds her that they're not allowed out unescorted, and considering Chiana's way of making friends, she doesn't blame them. Heavy closeups of Sikozy in her bikini, who turns and looks into the camera with alien eyes.

"Sparky and Wrinkles? They're the happiest of the crew. They're in gastro heaven." Noranti pours popcorn kernels into Rygel's open mouth: "It's called...*cop porn*." *Tasty!* "But T.R. Holt...he is not happy." John and Holt walk along outside IASA, both in dark sunglasses. "What's the big deal? It's a simple proposal, a trip on a spaceship for five hundred of Earth's best and brightest." Holt wonders who should pick those five hundred: John? "No, no. Let UNESCO handle that, or the Nobel Committee." Holt's more interested in, as he puts it, "keeping it local," which John translates as "red-blooded Americans" only. No deal, he says. "No cookie." Holt quotes an official: "The Farscape project was, and is, an American initiative. I do not think it is unfair that America should reap the first benefits of it." And what big-hearted patriot said that? "A former astronaut by the name of Jack Crichton." John stops and Holt looks at him. "Did you know we're making him IASA's Project Director for Extraterrestrial Studies?" He clicks his tongue. "Father and son. Dynamite PR." Holt begs John not to screw it up for Jack, who's "just so happy to be making a contribution." John takes off, asking if Holt's "nice suit" comes standard. Holt doesn't get the joke.

John's wearing totally cute kicks: black with white laces. "Which brings us to Dad." We watch the Crichtons in their dining room, through the curtains. "Dad's world was upside down, so he's trying to make it right side up by putting up Christmas decorations... even though it's Florida, and the whole block is cordoned off with security." Outside the alien mansion, a group of state troopers hold back the press.

"Family traditions. They're supposed to bring us together, and to make everything normal."

John drops onto the couch, family bustling all about; Aeryn enters. "So. You do this every cycle?" He corrects her: "Year. Every year." She corrects herself, bites a smile. Jack tells her that Christmas has always been "our" favorite holiday. John reminisces about the Christmas where the smoke came back down the flue because "Mr. Jingles" was up there; he brandishes a framed photo of the famed cat at Olivia. Jack begs him not to hold "one little mistake" against him. Everybody playing their part. "The cat didn't have hair for three months, Dad!" Aeryn reaches for the cat picture: "What the hell is that?" Jack and Olivia discuss the horrors of riding lessons as John explains housecats to Aeryn. She's met Chiana, right? It's all so warm, the easy rhythms of family. The easy way Aeryn smells her way in, looking at John, wondering if she lets herself in through this back door, he'll let her in the front.

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Bobby comes in, still rolling video. Jack and Olivia tease John about an ornament he made when he was five; John complains that next they'll "break out the bare-ass baby pictures." Jack asks Aeryn what she thinks about that, and with a huge grin, she nods. Jack threatens to go get the photo album, and Aeryn makes fun of his discomfort: "I've seen it already." Olivia and Jack continue to tease him; the doorbell rings. John heads out to answer the door as Jack beckons Aeryn over: "Here. Let me show you this..." A blonde woman -- Caroline, most recently from "Unrealized Realities" -- stands at the door, bearing mistletoe: "Special delivery from the Ghost of Christmas Past." John calls her Caroline before she wraps her arms around his head and kisses him, bottle in the other hand. Aeryn watches them kiss. "Welcome back to Terra Firma," says Caroline. John sees the confusion on her face and glances back to see Aeryn watching them; she drops her eyes when he sees her. "Hey, um...Caroline's here. Come on in." Caroline squeezes past John, into the room. John stands in the doorway, and in voiceover reminds himself that things have changed. Caroline and Jack say hello and he invites her in; Aeryn smiles politely at a photo album, gone from girlfriend to weird visitor in the ringing of a bell. She's fitting in, making the best of a situation. I don't know what the straight equivalent is to this exactly, but I know we've all felt it: I'm a good friend, you have a lovely family, and merry Christmas. Things have changed, John tells himself. "And we don't get to close our eyes and pretend they haven't." This is a funny one for me because I don't know the parallel you do, how you felt this, so I can only talk from what I know: I just know that *The House Of Yes* is my favorite movie because in the snap of your fingers, Parker Posey can be a man. You know? And that's Aeryn right now. You sit down, back straight, and try not to look at him too long, and you're grateful for the guest room. I'm a good friend, you have a lovely family. Merry Christmas. And life and the easy rhythms of family carrying on all around you. Walking that fine line of sex/not-sex and all the questions left unanswered. The open arms of your lover's family, and Caroline in the wings. I'm not going emo, I just can't figure out how you watch this from any other perspective. "And everyone is telling me how different I am. They're right, but they don't have a clue why. They can't know what I've seen, what I've done...what's been done to me." Birds fly overhead; a pair of pelicans land on the water. "They can't know what's out there waiting for them, and I can't tell them, because they wouldn't believe me."

Perhaps they'd lock him up. "Frell, I'd lock me up." Caroline walks down the dock, putting her hands on John's shoulders. Hands on the Crichton! John closes the book as he senses her arriving. "Hey, Buck Rogers. You're supposed to be fishing, not writing memoirs." She sits down, gets cute-nosy, but he just calls it "homework." Truer words. Caroline leans into him. "This was supposed to be a weekend off. No homework, no stress, no aliens, no demands. I guess I'm not doing my job." She turns his face towards hers, kisses him on the lips. He doesn't really respond.

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TV tells us that "Mankind has always seen himself as the center of the Universe." John eats microwave cop porn, as one does. "To discover that's no longer true is highly traumatic. A fundamental status quo is being threatened here. The very existence of Homo Sapiens may be under threat. It's hardly surprising the hysteria's rising." Jack enters and sets a drink on the table before John. "Hysteria? In what sense?" asks the interviewer. John offers Jack some popcorn. "The presence of these alien creatures has induced various forms of societal hysteria..."

"Holt says it's bad on the political front," says Jack. "Every nation's demanding equal access to the aliens and all the information we get from them." John doesn't see the problem there. "We're going to give it to 'em." Jack wonders why on Earth, in 2003, the US should share technology that could be used against them. "Cause it's the right thing to do. Wouldn't worry about it, Dad. Subcommittee'll tie it up for years and load it down with a ton of guidelines." Jack calls his son naïve; John asks when Jack's dream to unite mankind changed. "September the eleventh. This isn't the same world you left four years ago, son. People don't dream like they used to. It's about survival now." Whose? "Olivia's survival. And Susan and Frank and Bobby's. Imagine them blown up by a suicide bomb or coughing up blood from a poison gas attack. This country is under siege. You just don't understand the global situation." And is that because he's been out of town, John wonders, "or because Daddy knows best?" He takes a drink. Jack asks him to be fair, telling him he can arrange a meeting for John to fight this out with Holt, or even the President. Just as long as he's not looking at his father this way. "I don't want to argue with anybody," says John, which is exactly half of the truth. "No, you just want to be obstinate and insist everyone agree with you." They argue over who is most stubborn in the family, John cuts it close: "I am going into space tomorrow. If you'd like to come along, you're welcome. Unless you're too stubborn." Jack shakes his head, and bites back a reply, because he's still an astronaut and he still wants to go. I wonder how much of this is just resentment that John, gone four years now, has the option of naïveté about the world. How much is a father's yearning for a time when his optimism could be as simple as his son's. I wonder how much of it ever is, time travel and wormholes or no.

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Grayza's Skreeth prowls Moya's corridors; D'Argo greets John, who's brought Bobby and Jack. Bobby finds Moya: Awesome. "And this is just the garage," John says. Bobby begs for the tour, but John's busy, so he calls for 1812. Jack offers to give Bobby the tour, but John insists that they'll need a sherpa. He kneels to 1812 -- "Gimme that arm" -- and sprays one of the DRD's tool arms with WD40. "This should fix it up. It's a miracle." 1812 wiggles around, testing it. "1812, this is Bobby. Bobby, this is 1812. 1812 is going to be your tour guide. Don't let him break anything." Jack

takes Bobby to see the Pilot, after one false start in the wrong direction. "Jack. That way." Aww, [Jack And Bobby](#). I liked that show.

"You think they know how to open doors?" asks John. Heh. D'Argo asks John if he can check the wormhole's stability from Command, or if he needs to go outside again. "Command will be fine. I've had enough EVA to last a lifetime." Aeryn enters, John caught out and not looking, and she tells D'Argo the Prowler's systems all check out: "... So the scientists don't seem to have caused any damage." He assures her he made sure of that, and she thanks him and takes off. One Earth problem fixed. A million to go. Her face is tight and hard. Feeling the vibe, D'Argo pats John on the shoulder and leaves. There's a whole undercurrent here that's lovely, where D'Argo's like, "Hope the next five minutes don't suck *awfully* bad," and John's like, "Yeah, thanks."

John follows Aeryn into the bay, where she's still checking her Prowler and ignoring him. "You got a problem with them poking around at your prowler, why don't you leave it here? The IASA boys got enough to look at with D'Argo's guppy and my module." He looks under the wing at her, and she stands up, cutting him off. "Would it be better if I stayed here as well?" He asks why she would do that. He's such a fucking boy all the time. Don't write yourself this pass. "I'm clearly not fitting in," she says, clearing her throat. "Whatever, it's up to you." Up to her? Yeah. She holds his gaze. *Wanna flip another fucking coin, dipshit?* She swallows. "Fine, I...well, I don't mind your scientists poking around with my Prowler. I can even field-strip a cannon..." Demonstrations of soldier's readiness, overtures made while she continues to turn herself off, or at least down. And he knows, and he regrets, and he's on drugs. I love the laka storyline because it reverses them, and makes everything suspect: everybody thinks he just hasn't forgiven her, but the truth is so much more complex, and it all comes to a head here, where it should: at the beginning. He tells her they've seen enough, no need to bother, and she smiles but it doesn't reach her eyes. The Skreeth watches as he asks her, begging for mercy, if she needs help. No. "No, of course you don't." He's being a dick but it's the drugs. And you know how I feel about that shit. You have a lovely family. Merry Christmas. There are so many ways to be afraid.

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On the Command Carrier, Grayza pulls out a small box and removes something gross. Telling Braca "an explanation would be pointless," since he'll have no memory of what happens next, she spikes his forehead with the gross thing, and there's a green flash. Braca's eyes roll back and he becomes the Skreeth. "It's Grayza. Report." Crichton is currently on Moya, the Skreeth tells her through Braca, which is orbiting Earth. Which is where? "Unknown. We traveled through a wormhole to reach it." Meaning that they can't get there, so the Skreeth needs to do recon. "Allowing me to interrogate Crichton will yield quicker answers," the Skreeth protests, but Grayza of all people knows his immunity to interrogation. "Stay hidden until we know more. Understood?"

On Moya, the Skreeth becomes invisible; Grayza unplugs the now-sweating Braca, dropping him with a gasp and a groan. She puts her hand under his chin, pulling his eyes toward her: "We took a short break for recreation." She asks if he doesn't remember. "Perhaps you will next time." He thinks about how pissed Scorpius will be when he hears Braca's stepping out. She chucks his chin and stands: "But duty first."

Now at attention, Braca straightens his tunic and awaits orders. "Run a full weapons systems check immediately. I want this ship ready to destroy a planet." Oh really? John tells D'Argo, in a corridor, that Moya's readings match his homework: "It's gonna be at least seventy arns before the wormhole's stable enough for Moya to get back through." Three days is a long time, especially when you're high on laka with Aeryn and Caroline. D'Argo mentions Pilot's (and Moya's) excitement about "giving humans their first trip to the stars." Awww. John lets D'Argo know that's not happening: "We'll be long gone while they're still bickering over who gets the tickets." That's really sad. John tells D'Argo it's a plan to keep them occupied with something shiny so they don't just try to take the tech by force. "But we're not giving them anything," D'Argo notes. "Their scientists can't even work out how to use pulse pistols." Which is fine, since Earth doesn't have [chakkan oil](#) anyway. I like how John's handling all of this, even if the way it all works out is kind of heart-warmingly dorky. John examines a laka bulb and D'Argo stares at him; "Don't look at me like that," is John's response. As though they were still talking about the tech bluff: "You know how paranoid my planet is." D'Argo stays in the conversation not having to do with John's busy destruction of his romantic subplot: "Yeah, they don't like aliens." They don't like anybody, in fact, says John. "I'm glad to see you taking a positive approach," snorts D'Argo. He's gotten really good at these minefield conversations with my man John. "Cooperation, teamwork, distraction...give 'em a few hints, then we get the hell outta Dodge and hope they get their act together before the real space monsters show up." Look upward, while I duck out the back. John's really got a problem with confrontation right now.

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Luckily, the show won't let him off that easy. Jack approaches Aeryn in a corridor, and she offers him a ride planetside in the Prowler. John approaches with his journal, trying weakly for his short-term amends: "Go for it, Jack. She's the best pilot I've ever seen." He closes the book. "Think you can manage a side trip to the moon?" Oh, Aeryn grins. "I think I can do better than that."

Saturn. Jack giggles as the Prowler takes a turn around it. It would be Saturn, not just because planetary rings = crazy space, but also because he's the father. "I'm farther from Earth than any human's ever been." Aeryn chuckles at that, and Jack agrees: "I guess my son does have a few miles on me." Aeryn, in the fore seat of the Prowler, gingerly nudges the bubble: "He must be happy to be back on earth though." She is not so good at these conversations, but she does well here. I do love Jack and Aeryn together. Any version of Jack, really. Even in dreams, they always get the tone just right. "I don't know. He's having a tough time readjusting. He...hasn't talked much about what he's been through." Not even about...his shipmates? She's a kid in strange territory. I don't have a problem with the twists and turns of the John and Aeryn thing; at no point do I have a problem. I think this show probably does the romantic tension stuff better and more inventively than any show I've ever seen. As a writer I respect it highly. As a judgmental relationship expert who always knows best, the fourth season of this show drives me completely nuts, because they are both being total pussies. They have reasons, good reasons, crucial brilliant reasons, and maybe it's an Aries thing, I don't know, but it makes me want to slap them both across

the gorgeous face one hundred times without stopping. Don't *make* me write another [Office](#) recap, bitches.

Aeryn's face falls at Jack's response: "No, he's talked about your societies, customs. Remarkable stuff!" Jack already knows what she's asking; I don't think she knows that. She tries another angle: "He thinks that your species and mine might somehow be linked." Jack says that he wouldn't be surprised -- Earth geneticists are still studying it -- but if he didn't know better, he'd think she was human. She snorts. "I'm not." And since she is proving so terribly bad at this conversation, in her fear and loneliness, he takes the next step for her, cutting to the quick, so like his son: "Do you wish you were?" She claims innocence, and he asks outright if she has feelings for his son. "Does that shock you?" No. "I suppose it might, if I thought of you as an alien life-form, but I don't. John has not said anything to me, but I believe he has feelings for you too." I've had this conversation too. "He did," says Aeryn. "Now..." But Jack knows: "Now, he's home. That's one of the things he's gonna have to sort out. Just give him time." She hums, and loves Jack, and heads back toward Earth.

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Chez Alien on the Waterfront, where Sikozu is having a big fight with a cordless phone about how she's not having any kind of "biologic examination," acting like an "x-ray" is something unutterably horrible, with a large bruise on her forehead, and telling the person on the phone that if the other aliens are so into getting probed, they can damn well stick their probes up one of them. "You never know," says Chiana, predictably. "You might like it!" Which is funny and whatever, except what we don't know is that Sikozu has some serious fantastic reasons for not wanting anybody getting a look at her works. She finally tosses the phone out into the yard -- "Leave!" which I love -- and Rygel counsels her to eat one of his many hamburgers. "I do not *want* to eat. I want to go back to Moya!" Chiana says it's good, and gives her a gift for Pilot on which she's been working very hard. Suddenly Noranti bursts into song, accompanied by the Christmas book she's been trying to read. "Hark! The hiral angles sing-a! Glowry to the nude blowed king-a! Peach on Urp and murky millet! Goad and singers reckon sylled!" Chiana sings along, random words in a monotone, as Rygel grins. Sikozu finally snatches the book from Noranti's hands and tosses it out the door, onto the lawn.

Jack bends John's ear about the Prowler trip as they walk towards the Space Center. "Incredible! We flew through the Cassini Division! Beat the Cassini space probe by a year. I told Aeryn it was the best Christmas present I'd ever gotten, except for that tie-rack you made me in Junior High School." John hops up onto a rail. "Speaking of suits and ties, Holt is still fighting me on the tech-sharing plan and the explorer selection process. I could use a little support." Jack equivocates: "I've always supported you as much as I could, son." Which is the problem, if you're John. It was never enough. They argue about who's seeing the biggest picture, and John demands, again, that Earth work together on this. "Well, you're asking the impossible on that one." John throws his father's words in his face: "*Impossible is not in our vocabulary*. Who said that? You. You did. Four days before you set foot on the moon. You taught me to believe that. That belief kept me alive. Please tell me you still believe it." It's not rhetoric: his face is open and begging. He's ten years old. "I'm not sure what I believe anymore," Jack says, looking into his eyes. John holds his gaze

and walks away; Jack bows his head. It's an impossible equation to solve, and John's put him in the middle, but if you can't ask your father for the impossible from time to time I don't know what good he is. And the awful part is that Jack agrees with me.

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In the IASA hanger, DK and Laura are inspecting the *Farscape 1* with John. "All this crap you've tacked on!" DK laughs. They discuss the hetch drive, the FTL engine, and how it's impossible. "Newton, Einstein, Hawking...we prove them wrong every time we pop out for groceries." But he can't tell them how it works, because he didn't design it -- just installed it. His adaptation to the universe has made him a user, not a tech, about these things, and it's a void he and DK can't talk across. I don't know what a best friend is for if you can't ask him for the impossible sometimes: "Sure, drop it in our laps. Let us scratch our heads and look stupid while you go on *Nightline* or have lunch with the President." Not the point. Laura compares them to "Neanderthals, trying to understand 747s." John admires the laptops of 2003 and promises Laura he can't tell them what he doesn't know. DK asks why he even bothered. The Skreeth watches as DK continues: "If we're never going to learn anything, why rub our noses in how dumb we are?" John protests that they're not dumb, and Laura agrees: "Neither are you. Taka says you asked for a metallurgic analysis of these ships. You're on the track of something." John tells her it's the same old Command Carrier riddle: "Why do Prowler pilots turn to goo?" Even now, he's hedging not on Earth technology, but the concerns of the Uncharted Territories. He's thinking as an off-world scientist, and the one thing he can't tell them about is the reason why. DK and Laura watch John walk away, frustrated at his inability to hand this stuff over. The Skreeth watches them.

There is an elegant -- even beautiful -- symmetry to the lies he has to tell here. He can't tell Jack or DK about the wormhole knowledge, which means he can't tell them what he's looking for with the *Farscape* and Lo'La, so he seems to be playing both sides against the middle when in fact he's trying to save everyone by making both the tech and wormholes open source. But the algorithm is progressive: he can't do one step before the one that comes before, which means it's a waiting game, and everybody getting tired of his waffling. And then there's Aeryn. He can't tell Aeryn that he's forgiven her, that he's still in love, because he's afraid of her response, so he covers up with Iaka. He seems to be playing both sides against the middle when in fact he's trying to save them both, by making space in his heart for Earth and for her, whenever she decides to come home to him again. She's always been intimately tied up with wormholes, and with home: both the abstract concept, which she is, and the concrete, which must -- for the sake of his soul -- include her. Just like in the story, the two bones are just an optical illusion, and he knows it: he wants everything, home and Aeryn, and there's no reason he shouldn't have it, but the complications accrete. The algorithm is progressive: he can't do one step before the one that comes before, which means it's a waiting game, and she's getting tired of his waffling. Wormholes, Earth and Aeryn. Jack. Four different doors to the same thing: that part of John that used to be symbolized by Zhaan and now -- I hate to say it, but there's a strength in admitting, and in taking on the responsibility of saying it aloud -- is symbolized by Scorpius. You heard me. Just like Noranti is a better Zhaan 2.0 -- ugly truth traded for beautiful lies -- Scorpius is the best symbol of all that still lies beneath what John can

admit, and what John has to learn to love. Scorpius has always been intimately tied up with wormholes and with home, and with Aeryn. And Grayza fills that space in the credits, flows like vacuum, telling you he's changed location.

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DK and Laura make their way to the carpark. "Something's going on," DK knows, and Laura too: "John is holding out on us." Only omitting the horrible burden that has been wearing down his soul since the first season, the dick. An IASA security guard opens their trunk and the Skreeth leaps out, hissing horribly. It kills the guard first -- he fires shots into the air -- and then takes out poor DK and Laura. Every time John tries to protect somebody with dishonesty, they end up dead. It's an oldie but a goodie. Commercial and then back, to where the Skreeth is digging its claws into DK and Laura's faces, and talking to Grayza through Braca. It's kind of neat how the Skreeth never talks except through him, even in the scene with Grayza. "Are you sure that they're telling you the truth?" asks Grayza. Indeed. "Plainly, not all humans have Crichton's alleged ability to resist interrogation." I hate it every time they bring that up. I could love Grayza, except for that. Braca drools; DK and Laura scream awfully and bleed all over. "Then Crichton has given no wormhole information to Earth yet?" AKA the rub. Just like with Aeryn: the game he's playing is only destructive. Not that he's wrong, just that it's a lesser of evils and not a great plan. Which is, you know, his mandate. The Skreeth confirms: "That knowledge can die with Crichton." Grayza's like, get a grip on those horses and remember I'm in need of it too. "I'm confident I can capture him, but...doubt I can bring him to you." Since Grayza can't come to the Skreeth, she'll just have to seize him and learn what she can. "...Then execute him." Grayza agrees with the Skreeth and gives her leave to kill DK and Laura.

John sits at the dining room table, flipping through a photo album with some coffee, when Olivia enters. "Shopping with aliens!" she tells him, setting her stuff down. "They closed off the whole mall. The store owners, I'm sure, were very annoyed." She kicks her shoes off and sits with him. John shakes his head: "I'm sure they love it. It'll be in all their ads tomorrow...not to mention something to tell their grandkids." She notes the photo album: "Do you want to go live in the past?" He smiles at the kid-sister Psych 101 and also at the irony: "No *thank you*. I've been there." She gets serious: "Well, where do you want to live?" It's really a choice. You get so used to this show every week that -- at some point in the episode -- you kinda have to force yourself to understand that it's a legitimate question. Be with that for a sec. He could stay. "I don't know, you tell me. Where do I belong?" She asks if he misses this life, and he points to pictures: "I look at these pictures and I recognize the faces...some of the places. But it's not my life." He points to pictures of their mother, young Olivia herself, and their father. "I miss him, but I can't...he's changed." Olivia smirks. "He's changed so much that you can't talk to him? You know, he says exactly the same thing about you." John admits that he has changed, but tells her that he can't tell Jack why. "Because he's the Director for Extraterrestrial Studies," -- her face goes sad -- "What he hears, the government hears." Olivia can't believe he doesn't trust Jack. "Coming here was a mistake. It was an accident, and it shouldn't have happened." I'm not a shipper, but the echoes are really loud in here. Aeryn, wormholes, Earth, and Jack. "There are things that the government cannot hear." Like, something bad? He rushes to comfort his sister, beeping her forehead and talking like ET: "*Don't worry. It'll be okay.*" They

giggle and grab-ass and you could swear she's really Browder's sister. It's a neat moment. "*Trust me.*" She does.

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Aeryn enters Chezlien with some large wrapped parcels. D'Argo: "I see we've been shopping again." She asks if Crichton isn't around, and thanks "Chi" for helping her with the gifts. Outside, a security guard stands in the doorway with more. D'Argo, Rygel and Noranti are watching TV, D'Argo's having a snack. D'Argo tells her John's gone, but Bobby's outside, "interviewing Caroline Wallace." Aeryn goes still and acts like nothing's wrong -- four years in and D'Argo's still the Weeble in their love affair! I love it! But not as much as how Chiana always tries to put John in a reciprocal position with her and D'Argo, and he never bites. Chiana asks for help with her packages; Rygel groans and D'Argo asks if she's gone ahead and bought the whole planet. "It's not mine. It's from Aeryn. I don't know what it is, but...I know it's for Crichton." She piles her packages on top of the stack in a guard's arms. D'Argo: "Won't get him back. He hasn't forgiven her." She picks up another large box and heads out of the room -- "Oh, he will, sooner or later. Some males can actually forgive" -- knocking D'Argo in the shoulder. "Oh, sorry." *Advantage Nebari!* D'Argo watches her carry the box out of the room, and it's so wonderful, the look on his face: a mixture of irritation, love and a hell of a lot of affection. This makes me happy on several levels: One, because credit where it's due, that was awesome and cute. Two, because Chiana and D'Argo deserve each other, and I mean that in a good way. Also because I'd rather fuck Jothee than *my own angst* any day, which means Chiana is cooler than John and Aeryn put together. And three, because if Chiana and D'Argo are this obviously getting back to center, John and Aeryn can't help but follow, and I know that because I've seen this show before, and that is how the quadrille is danced. But okay and here's four: I don't think of "Unrealized Realities" as part of the triptych (I think of it as a prelude to "Constellation Of Doubt"/"Prayer"), because I love Chiana. I think the trilogy really runs from "[Kansas](#)" to "Twice Shy," because there's an undercurrent of the denied, secret healing that runs through them. And this is the first step: a declaration of terms. She's met D'Argo's mistrust and resentment (like Aeryn) with a push back, because of things she can't talk about (like John). And this scene is Karen Shaw's impudent retraction: she's willing to meet D'Argo halfway.

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The echoes across are loud: the laka is intimately tied to John's violation by Grayza -- lay down Chiana's blindness beside John's emotional blurring, see the way they draw a quartered square: Chiana can't make the jump from the body to the mind without the body going wacky, John can't cross from thought to emotion without hitting "Fractures" and his own violation. Chiana's steps toward freedom last week with Johnny, in terms of clearing the dark spot on the line, are mirrored here in Aeryn's discovery of the laka (and D'Argo bears witness to this, of course, because like John he's not present for his own drama, because he can't, because boys are pussies). The first two stories show Aeryn crossing that bridge to John's home and history. Next week, Chiana takes the step toward saving that hurt part of herself (with both sexy and horrible results); and John is able to reclaim the territory of his heart. It's crystalline and magnificent, but also I should disclose that I have the mother of all summer colds and earlier today I broke into doped-up tears watching Chiana's screen tests. Minute 11 of the makeup

tests is just a killer! I am so high right now! Gigi Edgley is awesome when she's just looking at you!

Speaking of awesome. Cousin Bobby's interviewing the lovely and unrealistically incredible Caroline: "So, how long have you known John Crichton?" She met him six years ago. "And how long have you been his girlfriend?" Aeryn enters the garden, behind Bobby, in faded jeans and a cute (only on Aeryn) western shirt, accompanied by a security guard, who stands guard at the gate. Caroline draws a hurried line across her throat at this line, seeing Aeryn approach: "Bobby, cut. Cut. Take five." It's adorable in a Jennifer Aniston *oh fuck* kind of way. Bobby sighs and leaves for his assigned break, and Aeryn walks over to her. It's very canny the way that Bobby is the normative voice, the one that sees alien Aeryn as a guest and human Caroline as the de facto girlfriend -- it lends a lot of weight to the awesomeness of Caroline, because it balances out her ability to not be an understandably jealous freaktrain like she 99.9% would be in real life.

"Don't stop, I'm interested in the answer!" says Aeryn. She laughs quietly to herself, and in that second she wins Caroline over. Sometimes it's better to just be honest. Well, all the time, but just putting it out there like that: it's Aeryn's MO and it fucks her a lot of the time, but I take it as a sign that she's (a) read enough of Caroline to know this is best, and (b) is demonstrating tremendous growth by the simple fact that she's opening the conversation by saying, "I am totally motherfucking out of my depth here and I need your help in this field exercise." I have no idea how this gambit would play in real life, because it's vomit-scary, but in the context of these characters it's a brilliant move. Caroline smiles a little too widely, but there's affection there: "Wanna tell me why you want to know?" Aeryn nods. "That's fair." They stand and begin to walk down the garden. "John and I were in a relationship." Caroline ducks her head, you know the gesture: "What kind of relationship?" Complicated. Caroline laughs, not unkindly. "I can imagine." Bobby films the flowerbeds. "...Well, actually, no. I can't imagine. John and I had a much simpler one. No strings, no grand plans, just good, casual times. Well, at least, that's how it was before." And now? The shadow over Aeryn's face, the open need. I'd be like, "Um, I'm actually a nun, and went back in time to not date him, is how much he's in love with you. Just please stop making that face at me."

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Which is pretty much what Caroline says: "...He doesn't even want that much." Aeryn stops: "But he's been spending time with you." Caroline hypothesizes, and this is where you either drop suspension of disbelief altogether or nominate her for sainthood: "I think he's been testing himself. Working out what he really wants. It's not me." Aeryn shrugs and says she's sorry, and Caroline laughs sweetly. "No you're not! You still want him, don't you?" She nods. So simple, a kid in strange territory. Just answering the question as it's stated, primitive, and not the thousands behind it. She'd pull a gun at a chess game. "Yes. But it doesn't matter. He doesn't want me either." Caroline disagrees. "When I asked him about you, he said...there was nothing going on. He said that several times." Aeryn's like, "See, that's bad." Caroline kindly writes this off as Aeryn's lack of understanding about humans, when we know it's actually due to her inability to understand *people*. "Sometimes when we repeat a lie, it means that we're trying to convince ourselves of the truth. And that is that he still loves you."

Very much." Angels bearing trumpets and Godiva chocolates descend and carry Caroline bodily into Heaven. Aeryn watches her, determined not to cry. Two transport pods hover nose-to-tail at the wormhole's other end. Scorpius asks Sikozeu about her forehead bruise, which is now much worse, and they talk about her turbulent travel back to him from Earth. "What are you doing?" she asks. They do their usual creepy Sex Dance of Death where they wriggle and undulate and make bizarre noises all over the place, but that kinda goes without saying. "Cross-coupling the fuel cells." Which, Sikozeu realizes, will "turn this pod into a bomb." Scorpius explains that the wormhole leads to John, which means that Grayza could find him, and Sikozeu asks if that means he thinks the Command Carrier will return. Scorpius says his "spy" on the Carrier hasn't been able to figure out what exactly she's up to, "But should she return, as a last resort I will detonate this pod within the mouth of the wormhole. That should destabilize it." Which of course means that he'll die. They nuzzle creepily. "You would have a better chance of destabilization with two pods," she groans, and he puts his hand around her throat.

I have no idea what's going on with these bitches most of the time, I will tell you that right now. They make little to no sense to me, and on top of it I can't ever keep their cover stories and quintuple-agencies straight. But you've got John and Aeryn torturing each other at one end of the wormhole, and Scorpius and Sputnik at the other end doing their weird fetish shit, and Scorpius just admitted he's willing to die, again, to keep John safe, and she's in for the long haul, and I guess that's worth something. And Grayza's got the Braca/Skreeth at the other end of the wormhole, but Scorpius has Skreeth/Braca in place at her end, so there's a whole yin-yang of triple-agent going on at which Braca is the nexus, and that's kind of pretty. Scorpius invites her to watch the sequence and they gaze creepily into each others' eyes, agreeing to die to keep John out of the PKs hands, hoping they won't have to before Braca goes 66 on Grayza's ass I guess, so it's a waiting game.

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In the IASA hangar, D'Argo informs John that Pilot just told him Sikozeu went back through the wormhole to get together with Scorpius. I guess three days have gone by: "That son-of-a-bitch. The wormhole must be stabilizing. She better not bring that bastard back through." Can you imagine? D'Argo assures him Sikozeu has no intentions of returning, and John's pleased with that. "Good. No comms." D'Argo agrees that they won't be communicating back across the wormhole; they walk past Jack and Holt.

"I will inform the President," says Jack. Holt complains that he's getting "major flak from the Hill" about John's global initiatives. "He's gotta bend a little." Jack stifles what I'm sure would be, on any other day, a guffaw. "Make him. It's your job. The Joint Chiefs are up in arms, they want to classify the alien technology as a national security risk and impound it." This plays so much weirder three years later; like they'd even ask the question now. They only thought they were decrying American paranoia. It borders on cutesy now. "John won't permit that. He'll take these ships outta here first." Holt levels: "Look, I know you share my concerns about John's plans. All I'm asking for is a little compromise. Is that unreasonable?" Jack looks down and walks away, thinking.

Jack approaches John and D'Argo with Chiana: we're at a reception apparently. Chiana complains to John that the party is no fun, as they leave Jack with the VIPs. He explains it's not a party, just a photo-op, which apparently translates fine. "Smile," he says. Jack watches them, thinking hard about Holt and the Hill. "Can't we find a real party somewhere?" Chiana's very jumpy. Jack calls everybody to attention; his disrespectful son murmurs, "Here comes the 'My fellow Americans.'" He's such a little shit all the time.

"I once told my son he'd get the chance to become his own kind of hero. Well, he got it. And he made the most of it." Everybody snaps pictures; John, D'Argo and Chiana listen in the crowd. "I also taught him to stick to his guns when he thought he was right, so I can't fault him when he does. I've heard it said that he should accept our judgment over his because he owes us. I've even said it myself." Jack pauses. I don't understand why you would even introduce this whole problem if you're going to solve it so easily. It's the reconciliation of the John/Jack stuff, I get that, and this is the only way you can do this, but I think Jack should be less rah-rah about it. It's heartwarming at the expense of the weight of what's come before. Jack's nationalist tendencies in the wake of 9/11 puts a beautiful new spin on the "Earth is not ready for your jelly" story we first deconstructed in "A Human Reaction," radicalizing John's simple-minded "everybody shares" liberal ethic in the wake of a reminder that the world is demonstrably not good at choosing love over fear. All of which is good, and very *Farscape*, but then...Jack caves. I don't get it: "We're wrong. Look at the friends he discovered...the miracles he brought and then ask yourself what he owes us as compared to what we owe him." Chiana salutes him with her bottle of champagne; a nearby official nervously searches his pockets for that last Viagra. "Now, John insists that we share these wonders with the rest of the world, but some people are afraid of what'll happen if we do. John's afraid of what'll happen if we *don't*. And I'll go with that." Which I do, of course, buy, and I love it and I love this scene, but it's weird. Like with Caroline before: is it a trout, or a bass? It rings untrue, and we know for a fact that the carrot has arrived and they're actually on Earth. Which is what makes this episode so awesome, so I need to stop with the gift horse. Holt stares at Jack, equal parts perturbed and sad. I imagine him thinking, "That was awesome, but it's so sad about how the CIA is now going to murder you." Jack looks deeply into his son's eyes: "So, as IASA's Project Director for Extraterrestrial Studies, I hereby invite all nations to participate...in the ongoing *Farscape* mission." It's so well-stated; Jack Crichton is a beautiful man and good public speaker. John starts the applause and the crowd is impressed and bewildered at this show of the open hand; Holt's applause is like sour milk.

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In the elevator: What made Jack change his mind? "Because I believe in you." It's wonderful. They walk through the carpark, where DK and Laura still lie: "That means a lot. There's a few things we should talk about." Meaning of course that Jack has earned ("Was it a trout, or a bass?") the full knowledge of John's experience. That he's a father first and a suit second. Which means family, which means when Jack says, "Son, it's Christmas Eve," John agrees that it'll keep. It's very subtle, this thread in the episode. So much of what John's going through is, of necessity, under the surface. All the lies around him that he thought would go away, if he could just go

home. And they keep pulling tighter. They get into the car with the guards and head home; the Skreeth wraps herself around the back bumper.

Smiling Olivia holds the door for Aeryn, who's back in her leathers. "I know you're preparing for a private dinner, so I won't stay long." Olivia closes the door behind her, not sure what to do with this new Aeryn, somehow less a sister than before. "Is he...is John here yet?" Olivia leads her into the house: "Um, no. Not yet." Aeryn offers Olivia her clothes back, and Olivia asks if they didn't suit her, laughing awkwardly. This need to reach out. The damnable, wonderful tentacles of family drawing you in. Aeryn apologizes with her eyes and says she's more comfortable in black leather. "It's what I am, I guess," and they laugh like sisters. "And I brought the books, as well. I really appreciate it...everything." The sadness in her eyes, watching maybes and somedays drop like dead flies, like fantasies. Unrealized realities. "Are you leaving?" says Olivia, leaning in for a closer look. "You'll be here tomorrow morning to open presents with the rest of us, won't you?" The *of course* love that Aeryn has such trouble understanding. Aeryn: "I may not." Olivia worries -- "What's happened?" -- but Aeryn puts a calm, sweet face on it. "Nothing bad. It's not bad." The echo of John's scene with her earlier, the need for Olivia not to worry as the world's falling down around them. As the rejected love and bad wisdom ripple out, breaking apart this new family in ways that Jack and Olivia can't know. Leslie died and John got ate by a wormhole, and even DK marrying Laura didn't make them less alone. They did their best to make a home and a family, just the two of them. Olivia never married. It was just the two of them. And then John came back, bearing a beautiful new black-clad sister. And the world fell apart, and she doesn't even know it yet. Aeryn protests that no, she'll just probably be needed back on Moya for a while. "It's all right." Olivia goes to check on dinner, assuring Aeryn she'll be right back. Begging her not to leave. In this family, I bet her shit's fine-tuned.

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In the hanger, Chiana's futzing with Viagra's tie: "So...are you as bored as I am?" She flexes her knees and assumes the position, teasing him. Holt runs up all apologetic -- "she's still learning our customs" -- and she turns her aggression on him. "Spank you very much? Maybe you can teach me." She bumps Holt's hip. As weird as it is, it's funny enough. D'Argo grabs her elbow and drags her away: "Okay, Chiana, let's leave." She continues to go all Chiana on the party, twisting around to yell at them: "What's wrong with you guys? ...Scared of us still?" Her outfit is totally adorable: short skirt like "Video Killed The Radio Star" and cool tights.

D'Argo hustles her out into the carpark for a Very Special Public Announcement about how: (a) all humans are bigots, who (b) fight even amongst their own species, and maybe, Chiana agrees, that's (c) why they barely left their own planet. Do you see the scientific ethics commentary? *DO YOU?* D'Argo smells something -- is it pedantry? -- no, it's the Skreeth. They check out DK and Laura's car, where the bodies are horribly lying. "Frell," whispers Chiana. John is a bad penny.

Jack walks into his living room, shedding his jacket and demanding his escort have some eggnog. He spots Aeryn, who's still standing there, awkward, and greets her warmly. John sees her and stops moving. Jack and Olivia take the guard into the kitchen, leaving John and Aeryn alone. Merry Christmas!

"I'm sorry," Aeryn says. "I just have to drop some things off to Olivia." These two. John bites his lip and assures her it's fine, and Aeryn darts a glance toward the kitchen. I don't like having scenes from my life played out in Technicolor like this, especially if I'm not being played by Ben Browder. Not that either of them are very flattering to be right now. "Do you want me to go back to Moya?" He cocks his head, unwilling to give a goddamn inch. "We've already talked about this. It's entirely up to you." Her eyes flash and she sets her jaw. "Fine. I'll go with what you prefer." He looks at her, questioning. "Look, I'm not trying to pressure you, John." Her voice nearly breaks. "I'm actually trying to...take the pressure off. *Would you be happier if I wasn't here on Earth?* You don't have to justify it or explain it. Just give me an honest yes or no." He breathes. The really hilarious part is that I could not have watched this episode for the first time at a less opportune moment or with a less opportune viewing partner. January 17, three weeks later. I literally wanted to crawl out of my skin and then eat it for breakfast and then blow up a bank and then punch your mom. Has that ever happened to you? It's so lame. The last time my world worked its kinks out so weirdly and predictably in sync with a TV show was *Buffy*. Let's just say 2000 - 2001 were a fucking hellride. I still kind of blame Joss Whedon for 2000 and 2001.

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Jack interrupts, of course, asking Aeryn to stay for dinner. She begs off and Olivia strengthens his ranks as he's pushing: "There's always room for one more." The tears on her face are hidden by a three-quarters turn and her long black hair. Her voice always sounds like that. "It's a...traditional family thing." Oh, I cannot stand this! "We'll start a new tradition!" John says. Girl, just leave. Just walk out. "Look, it's up to you, but we'd love to have you." John asks Olivia, without looking away from Aeryn's turmoil, for a glass of eggnog. Olivia looks at them, hard, but goes to fetch it. Aeryn brings her head back up, cheeks covered in tears, and John steps close, the words on his tongue.

"Tell me you mean it. Step around those mine fields and the sixteen layers of rhetorical bullshit and tell me you're actually asking me to love you. Tell me it's not about Christmas, or Earth, or wormholes, or Jack. Tell me you won't accept the guestroom gratefully. Tell me from your pride and your fear that you're with me. All you ever had to do was ask. I cannot stop loving you. There is no pain greater than standing this close to you, smelling you, and not knowing if I'm allowed to love you again. On the other side of lies, and pain, and all the slings and arrows, is the only home I know and the only star I can sail by. The Prisoner's Dilemma only ever ends in hope. Please tell me this time is real, and I will give myself to you completely. All we ever did was die on each other. *Just live, just live, just live.*"

...But of course the Skreeth attacks instead, and Olivia screams, and the Skreeth goes for her, and John and Aeryn -- face still covered in tears -- go into action. Combat ensues! The Skreeth grabs people and savages them! People flying through walls! Tables destroyed! Do not invite John and Aeryn to Christmas! Aeryn shoots at the thing like a hundred times! Christmas in flames! Skreeth turns invisible! All the lights go out and things are electrically dangerous! Everybody listens for the Skreeth but the Skreeth is vanished! John and Aeryn draw on each other! One-second pause. The Skreeth appears behind Aeryn and grabs her! She bites Aeryn's gun! John hits the Skreeth with some laka! "Suck on this!" he says! Aeryn asks what the Skreeth is

sucking on! John says never mind! They hit the Skreeth! She hits back! He hits her with a chair! The Christmas tree goes down! Do not invite John and Aeryn to Christmas!

Aeryn pulls herself up: "John. Winona." And that's how you know they're going to be okay. He runs upstairs for his gun as the Skreeth rushes Aeryn, who shatters the glass coffee table and lies still. The Skreeth grabs John by the foot by punching through the wall beside the stairs; he tries to pull away and the Skreeth pulls the rest of the wall out. The Skreeth is kind of awesome. John pulls the Skreeth up the stairs by his ankle, one step at a time, because John is also awesome. "I've got Crichton," Braca hisses, spiked, Grayza watching eagerly. The Skreeth howls, and John kicks her in the face; she goes flying back down the stairs long enough for him to duck into a bedroom.

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The lights flicker, more electrical danger happening, and Aeryn still on the floor surrounded by glass. John comes out with Winona in both hands, looking around for the Skreeth. All the lightbulbs are flashing and popping. It's very creepy. John cases the scene and the Skreeth suddenly appears behind him. Winona discharges, hitting the ceiling, and they fall off the balcony back to the first floor, under a giant chandelier. Winona goes skidding across the foyer. John tries to get his breath back; Aeryn opens her eyes to see the Skreeth looming over him, hand on his throat. Aeryn grabs Winona (whoa) and shouts a warning to John -- "Clear!" -- before shooting the chandelier down. John rolls away, and it gets the creature but good.

Braca screams, staggering; Grayza grabs his hands and watches him scream and sink to the floor.

John gets to his knees, watching the Skreeth gasp and spaz out. Aeryn helps him up, and they take deep breaths, looking at each other. They turn to the innocents: John to Jack and Aeryn to Olivia. They're battered but okay. As they all agree that they have no idea what just happened, the loud roar of Lo'La approaches outside. Everybody gasps and Aeryn spots her outside the French doors, palm trees all tattered and everything rushing back and forth like a storm. Olivia screams again: the Skreeth is back up. D'Argo targets her and takes her out with an enormous shot of blue science. The glass shatters and then the Skreeth shatters. After all the questions and yearning, this is what happens when John comes home. It's not his home anymore. This house is his old life. The Skreeth's death blows out the front door, scattering debris all over everybody.

Braca screams, face covered in spittle. Grayza crouches, he holds his head in agony. "What is it? Tell me what's wrong!" He can't; he collapses.

When the explosions calm down, John looks around. Aeryn and Olivia anxiously rise. "Well. Merry frelling Christmas," Aeryn says, and John nods. "Amen."

Grayza moves fast! She lies down beside Braca, unzipping her uniform for a quick Heppa hit, waking him. She's removed the Skreeth tool from his forehead. He leans back and gasps, seeing her above him. "Ma'am!" She assures him it was "the best ever," and that he continues to amaze her. Then, Grayza is awesome. "I'm glad I could be of service," he stammers, and she smiles down at him archly. He backtracks. "I mean, I'm pleased I could satisfy..." oh, the smile at this one. She looks away, grinning secretively. It's so awesome. He sighs, outmanned. "Will that be all?" She

breathes, queen bee of all time: "Yes...for now." He groans, runs off with his uniform held closed with one tight hand. She watches him go, delighting in his discomfort and perceived inadequacy -- I love this scene so much, she rocks it -- but once he's gone, she sighs, exhausted. What the fuck now?

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Aeryn's Prowler flies into Moya's hanger bay, where a huge trolley of junk is rolled out. "All the food goes to my chamber," says Rygel, indicating a huge bag of cop porn and some BK. Chiana asks what to do with John's presents: "You wanna put 'em in his quarters?" Aeryn shakes her head: "Not the right time. Cargo bay for now." She pushes the payload forward. D'Argo informs them they're leaving as soon as John gets on board. He lends her a hand with the trolley. The easy rhythms of family. Aeryn pulls Noranti aside, proffering the laka bulb. "What's this?" *Oh, fuck* say all three of Noranti's eyes.

Noranti looks away, keeps walking. Aeryn follows, protesting that Noranti must have made it. "It's for Crichton," Noranti says noncommittally, and keeps walking. "What does it do?" No response, but Noranti stops. "*What does it do?*" She finally -- with a "you asked" look -- turns to look at Aeryn. "It's to help him move on. Surmount his feelings and forget." Forget who? Noranti looks at her deeply; her barely open third eye glows blue. She turns and leaves, and Aeryn stands in the middle of nothing, staring at that tiny drug. Thinks about her culpability; puts it away again. Perhaps she pockets it. Perhaps she cries, I don't know. I'm just happy she finally found out.

Olivia holds out an open jeweler's box, holding an elegant diamond band. "I was gonna give you this on Christmas," she says, crying. John takes off his shades and looks at her. "This is Mom's." A tear runs down Olivia's cheek. "She left this to you," he says, but Olivia shakes her head. "I want you to have it. Mom'd love that." He snaps the box shut, a plane flies overhead. They'll do their best to make a home and a family, just the two of them. Olivia will never marry. It's just the two of them. Her voice breaks, just a whisper: "Don't go," and he whispers back, "I have to go." His father's ring was a puzzle: figure it out and you find your way home. But this ring is a puzzle, too. It means home, and it means that home is whatever star you choose to sail by. It started with his father's ring, and a thousand different possibilities; it ends literally with his mother's ring, and all the promises you can guarantee from an ending. Jack steps over, stops moving as John -- in his long black duster -- embraces his sister. They take a deep breath; another jet flies by. Olivia is crying. John kisses her on the forehead and whispers, "You take care." He touches her cheek; she cries harder, and looks away. John looks down and sniffs, rubbing at his eyes. Jack, his face a portrait of longing, says just one word: "Stay." John shakes his head; he can't even speak. "Look, we'll guard the wormhole. We'll...we'll set up a defense shield. Nothing'll get through." Except SciFi, if you like that show. "No," John says, "I have a job to do." He never even got to tell him about the wormholes; life interfered. He has a job to do. "Your words again," he grins, pointing at his father. "I don't want to lose you, son," says Jack. And his voice is so old, and sad, and small. His breath is ragged. "I can't shake this feeling that you're not comin' back." John promises he'll return; Jack bites his lip. So much worse, this time. Son disappears, you can mourn. But when your child leaves for good, where do you put it? Ask any father ever. "You take care of my home," says John, nearly destroyed. "It's a promise." You can barely hear him.

John wraps his arms around his father, kissing him softly on the cheek. "Take care of yourself," he whispers. Jack sniffs, close to breaking, and watches his son walk away, shades on, into the light, and hopes he'll come back. But you and I both know this shit was a cakewalk compared to what will happen then.

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- Kiss Of The Spider Woman -

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Previously: Aeryn had lots of secrets, like how she was pregnant and how Scorpius was under her asylum. John also had lots of secrets, like he was on the smack so he could get over Aeryn. The universe *loves* secrets. Today, Scorpius is walking through *Moya* with a herd of DRDs, demanding to know why there's a trading vessel still aboard. "The negotiation is proving difficult," Pilot explains: they're gouging our kids on star charts because they know *Moya* has to get through Tormented Space. Um, how come Scorpius is not doing the negotiating? Knowing them, it's probably like Rygel and...who else is a crackhead? Noranti. I know Rygel has this diplomatic ability and whatever, but they've got *Scorpius* now. He could sell ice cubes to Alaskans and still end up drilling for oil.

Scorpius joins John, Aeryn, and D'Argo at the rear of the hangar bay, where they're watching Noranti and Rygel negotiate with the armed traders. Chiana's watching too. There's that symmetry where the big kids have equal guns on the other side as the game goes on. The traders are gross, with sores on their faces like the horrors of crystal meth. Aeryn's watching, tapping her fingers on her pistol with her teeth clenched, pretty much disgusted by John's presence. John watches her, but she won't talk to him or tell him what's wrong. "Musta been something I said." Noranti gets the traders over a barrel and she and Rygel retire; on their way out of the room Scorpius points out they look more than usually smug: "Your deal, it was successful?" Do Scorpius and Noranti ever directly address each other? Rygel giggles that Scorpius has no idea how successful, and the traders bring out one last piece of merchandise. A young woman, held by her hair, bent over, hand in her hair where it's being pulled. Gasping. Chiana crouches now, up on her feet. This episode is stupid in many ways, but the balancing act itself is pretty much half the job, and they've been doing it all season. It's easier to swallow if you pretend Talikaa, the girl, doesn't actually exist. Like on *Nip/Tuck*, where nobody's real except those three people. She's not a plot device, the show's too smart to leave it at that. Call her a mirror. Call her *Beloved*. "We enjoyed her," says the trader. "Plenty of good pleasure left." The girl stares at Noranti, lip quivering; Noranti signals nothing. "No value to an old woman, but..." Noranti turns away, leaves him talking. He puts his hands on the girl, one on a breast, the other rubbing her abdomen, and lower: "...But to men?" She grabs at his hands as he laughs; Chiana shrieks like a beast. She pulls a pistol on him: "Touch her again, fekik, and you die!" Everyone draws; D'Argo yanks out his Qualta once again. The trader stands behind the girl, now released, with arms crossed. John's got Winona trained on them, and he and D'Argo try to calm her down. Chiana's horrified: "Have you forgotten what it's like to be a prisoner?" But that's not what she's asking. What she's really asking is something only John knows. D'Argo closes his eyes, because he

knows this look of Chiana's. Chiana asks impossible questions. The trader offers the girl for \$800; Chiana begs the crew at large, asking them all: "We can't just leave her!" Finally, she nods to herself, after everyone's avoided her eyes. Only Rygel can say it's not his problem, everyone else has to be silent. "Okay. I'll buy her myself if I have to." Rygel reminds her about [the Vorc](#); she almost smiles.

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"What's your name?" To strange clicks, hums, a sound like harpsichord: Talikaa. She lowers her gun arm and stands near the girl; she points the gun at her head. "Here's the deal. We take her, or I take her head off." A choice she would have appreciated; a choice she's nearly taken before, on her stupid Nebari planet. If it were just about Chiana's rape trauma, that would be one thing, but we're looking at all of her now: a girl whose fire was dampened before the season began, who's been dark and fractured and burnt all season, never speaking or telling. Rygel tells them all to go hell, but D'Argo sees the desperation in Chiana. "Rygel, pay them." Rygel stalls, D'Argo screams. John catches on: "Sparky! Cough it up." It's not about money, it's about Chiana. Impossible questions. John grabs some cash from Rygel and -- Winona skyward -- hands it over. "A smart purchase," grins the trader. "You'll have fun with her." Chiana screams again, pain and rage. Scorpius watches, concerned. He knows where he came from. D'Argo and John agree it's a bad idea, but they know they can just drop her off on the first "nice planet" they find.

None of them have ever been chattel, except Chiana. None bought and sold like this. Chiana promises Talikaa she's a friend; Talikaa whimpers. Monstervision close-up on Chiana as Talikaa looks at her. She touches the bare skin of Chiana's chest and pushes away, gasping. She bounces from Moyan to Moyan, in a complicated choreography, less chaos than total coverage: from Aeryn to John, from Rygel to Scorpius, who -- of course -- finally catches the terrified girl. Each of them in monstervision, each of them touched by the mirror. She reaches up to touch the skin of his cheek, near his eye, but he pushes her hand away. D'Argo grabs her and hands her off to Chiana: "Take her to your room. She is your responsibility." Chiana leans in: "Hey, Talikaa. Come on. I'll get you some food and some better clothes." They leave, Scorpius follows. Noranti watches everything, as Pilot informs the crew that the traders' vessel has left the bay. How much does she know? Ever? She spends so much time being mysterious.

John breathes in, quickly. Turns to Aeryn, who slowly looks back. He stands, thumbs in belt loops, and walks to meet her face to face. "So you're angry with me? Let's talk." We've heard this one before: "I don't want to talk." He starts to try again, but she clubs hell out of the side of his head, and he staggers. Aeryn leaves with a swish of duster and long fake hair. Credits.

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John follows Aeryn down the corridor as she's telling him they've nothing to talk about. "The hell there's not. You hit me!" Aeryn looks at him sidelong: "You lied to me." And this is rhetorically maybe not so smart, because he points out that she lied too, when she said nothing was bothering her. So, I guess he's Homer Simpson in this episode. Fabulous. At least this week there's a plot reason. "Okay, so I didn't tell you about the poppers, you didn't tell me about the baby. Does that mean I get to hit you now?" She looks him right between the eyes. "I would not advise that." He climbs up onto a

workbench and looks her in the face: "Oh, you...do not scare me, missy." She gives him a very fucking scary look and he backs off. "Okay, you scare me a little." She resumes working. "You want the truth? I was taking that crap from Noranti...to forget you. But you gotta admit..." Don't say it! You're too cute to die! "...It's kinda romantic." I fully expected her to shoot him at that point. What are they teaching boys these days? "I'm just crazy about you," he says, training the full power of those baby blues on her. "So it's my fault," she says, gone cold. Deaf to his protests. "You should have been stronger."

"Oh, God!" he groans. "Aeryn, please! Honey, give me a break! I'm weak. I'm human." He falls to his knees in front of the workbench: "I'm a guy." Not the point. Don't ever say that. It's the weakest fucking thing you can say. Don't even think it. Aeryn slams a chest closed and walks away. He follows, grabbing her; she whirls and he drops her arm, hands in the air. The story's already started and they don't know it. She's wheeling out of control, grasping at straws; he's giving into despair and whistling in the dark. Everybody gives this last burst of their lie, everybody retreats into their roles without thinking, because contemplation of what's coming shuts them down. So she's never been so cold, so protected; he's never been more pig-headed or self-consciously oblivious. She glares and he points at her, two-handed: "We're gonna be fine." Her face like a mask, chaos behind it: "No. We're not." So still. She fairly runs. "Aeryn. Do not walk away. Much as I love it when you walk away...Aeryn!" He goes on talking to himself. "We're gonna be fine. She likes me." He nods, stares, heads off the other way. Everything's fine.

Talikaa stands quietly, wearing her new outfit: a dusky peach number with a big metallic belt. Long skirt, silver collar. She's got a face like a bowl of dog food in some light, exotic beauty in others. Is she a supermodel? Too short. "Wow! That's much better," Chiana says, doing her weird crotch dance she does, all around Talikaa, putting her hands on the girl's hips, laughing. "Fits great! Looks nice." Everything's fine. Talikaa chokes out a laugh, mirroring her savior. "It looks, uh...sexy." Talikaa asks what that word means, "sexy," and Chiana's face falls. "Oh, a girl as beautiful as you shouldn't...shouldn't have to ask that." She stands back, holding Talikaa's hands in hers, taking the girl in all at once. "Sexy is, um..." She takes the long way around, nuzzling her hair. "...Sexy." Talikaa leans into it. "You like sexy?" Chiana circles, smelling, touching her from hip to shoulder, heads close. "...Yeah. It's my...it's my favorite color." She puts her chin on Talikaa's shoulder and closes her eyes: "Makes you feel good, knowing men want you." Talikaa jerks away, and looks back over her shoulder at Chiana, who circles around back in front, in silent response to her fear. This isn't a conversation, it's a monologue.

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"Sorry," Chiana says. To herself. "Most men aren't...aren't like those traders. Most men are, uh...are pretty drad." Monstervision again: "You like men for sex?" Chiana, one last burst of her old ego, retreating to a dead shell: "They're good for other things, but they're great for sex." This last said in a kind of mad ecstasy. The fact that we spend most of our days playing out these lies, telling propaganda in service to the person we think we are. They never figure out the MO here, not really, but it's more interesting to talk about it up front. If you made a list of five things about yourself, anything at all: "Woman." "Teacher." "Scaper." "Foodie." "Intellectual." Or if you're

Chiana: "Rape activist." "Healthy sexual being." "Ecstatic." And then pick that list up in five minutes, and see how sad and flaky and thin the paper is: how every single thing on that list is really just ego, just identification with something larger, to give yourself context and power, power over your circumstance and pain. A way to make your messy, awful experience into a story. If that list were a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand words long, it would never approach who you actually are. An infinity of words doesn't make you real, or any more real than you already were before you started the list. Chiana loses her sex drive not because it's her "strongest trait," like she thinks. She loses her "sex drive" because that's what she needs most right now: a reason to think she's possible of getting back her innocence, of enjoying sex the way she used to. It's this lack of hope she's talking to, this fear and abyss they're all fighting. Not the strongest trait, but the one they need most this week, in order to head into Act Three of the season. This episode is stupid in many ways, but it's necessary in more.

Chiana gulps as Talikaa steps closer: "Just men?" Chiana stares at Talikaa, thinking, as we all did, I'm sure: "Always kind of assumed not." Talikaa touches Chiana's comm badge, the breast beside it: "You like this?" She caresses Chiana's face; Chiana turns her lips toward her fingers. Talikaa strokes down her cheek, under her jaw, as Chiana gasps at her touch. "Is this sex?" Chiana kisses Talikaa's hand and smiles at the question. "Yeah," she nods, all angles again. "It's...it's getting pretty close." They're wrong. This isn't sex, it's a Peaches song. It's masturbation, it's freshman year, it's a Tori Amos concert. You don't fuck your pain, you don't make sensuous Sapphic love to it: you take it out behind the fucking barn. Aeryn comes across this little scene and watches as Chiana and Talikaa lean in vibing hardcore, kissing. Grinning. "Chiana," Aeryn says, in that voice that you don't ignore. The kiss stops, and Chiana looks at the door; Talikaa looks away, one hand still on Chiana's breast.

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Out in the corridor, Aeryn's all ready to take on the big sister role, and Chiana's ready to be the outraged little sister: "Okay, *what* is your problem?" Aeryn, who even on her best day wouldn't understand this little maneuver -- though she's done it too, on a planet of ghosts -- is like, "So you basically brought this girl onboard to make her your own toy?" Aeryn stands at attention, Chiana leans in: "We were just...talking. Girl stuff." She slaps leather, putting her hand on Aeryn's waist. "Oh, come on. I get feisty. I'm not like you." Chiana pushes Aeryn against the wall, holding her arms, leaning in close. "You don't need it. I do." This isn't a conversation, it's a monologue. Watch her tell herself: "It's not a crime." It's not just the perps that return to the scene of the crime. We know the story, I don't need to tell you the story, but it's all here. The lies she's telling herself. It's horrible. Aeryn pulls back, into the wall, with every inch of herself, looking down at this frightening girl. "This is excessive even for you, Chiana." I really like that line, even in the midst of this awful scene. Chiana plays cute so much of the time that when you're asked to look directly at it, it hurts too much. She smiles and leans closer. "Well, if you're not into it...I could always ask Crichton." She lays one finger along Aeryn's jaw, leans in to kiss her neck. "You mind?" Aeryn fights a three-way battle, held against the wall by a girl, by a child so much smaller than herself. With a need and a fear so much larger than anything. In turmoil she's spent the season holding back, now feeling those waves break upon the shore, holding onto

icy control. It's her own thing she's dealing with that makes her the only person capable of dealing with Chiana right now; it's the way our sicknesses fit together like Legos that keeps us from growing. "Do what you want," Aeryn says, pushing past. Chiana watches her leave, and breathes, and summons up the will to continue the lie. Everything's fine.

John whistles, hapless and fancy-free, unworried, optimistic as ever, as Talikaa peers around the door of his quarters. He's playing with a slinky, tossing it out and back like a yo-yo. "Hey! Hey, how you doing?" He invites her in, apologizing for the mess. He starts half-heartedly picking things up. "Chocolate? Fresh from Earth." Like I said, I always hate this John; I'm glad the show realizes it's enough of an aberration, this Goofy John persona. Talikaa shakes her head wildly and steps back. "Don't be afraid! Come on in, we're friends!" He sits down, becoming smaller and less imposing. She comes in slowly, hands behind her back, shy and hesitant: "For sex?" He laughs, like that's not a huge red flag, and talks about the chocolate in his mouth: "No, no. That's a different kind of friend. A *special* friend." They laugh together; it's not really that funny. This is the John that finds everything funny. She finally sits and he nods at her. "A special friend. Like you and Aeryn." He cocks her head at her, taken aback, a little hurt, then retreats to his shell. "Chiana, right?" He grins stupidly. She nods. "But I can see it for myself. Anyone can. You are hers, and she is yours. Or am I wrong?" Monstervision as he keeps the act going, bobbling his head around and smiling: "No, you're right! You're absolutely right." He looks away and their smiles both fall; when he looks back to see her staring, they both burst into laughter verging on the hysterical. Everything's fine.

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D'Argo stands at a projected star-chart: "These maps look legitimate. Information about the dangerous sectors is accurate, it should be easy for us to evade them. Looks like the old witch actually did a good job." He turns it off, and of course Rygel's offended: "Don't I get any credit?" For what? Rygel throws him a coin, which he's actually altered to appear twelve times its worth. Which is to say, the reality, the real worth of the coin, has been leveraged against a counterfeited worth that it never had. The coin is pretending to be something it never was. "You cheated the traders?" Rygel laughs. "More for me!" If Rygel were being himself he wouldn't admit it; if D'Argo were being himself, he'd roll his eyes and fix it. Instead, they both get hyperactive: Rygel gives propaganda about how terribly greedy he is, how he's fucked them all once again and gotten away scot-free, and D'Argo simply screeches about how stupid and selfish Rygel is. John watches them play this out, like puppets before a screen; D'Argo attacks the Hynerian and John rushes in to break them up. "Sparky? What'd you wanna do that for? These are not the guys we wanta piss off. We have to be out here for a while and we need to be able to do business." D'Argo bitches further; Rygel tells him the forgeries would fool anyone. Any other week, perhaps. This week it doesn't actually matter. This week, forgery is all they have.

"Ryg, you can't do stuff like this," John sighs. "You're jamming us up." D'Argo screams and offers to give Rygel to the traders for their whore. Whoa! Noranti comes to watch the proceedings as D'Argo goes ever more nutso. John offers them a snack and Rygel immediately Jazzies over to claim the food; D'Argo explodes with rage and knocks it to the floor. Rygel gasps and steps back, D'Argo snarls at him, John steps in

once more. "Chill. Chill, bra. It's under control, all right? We're gonna make it right." Noranti slips into the room. "We're gonna phone these guys, we're gonna tell 'em we made a mistake, and we're gonna make it right." Rygel asks if he's fahrbot, and D'Argo goes off on a thing about how he's the Captain. Rygel takes off all, "Keep your hands off my shit," and D'Argo goes after him again. D'Argo's strongest trait isn't rage, it's fear. It's rage he *needs*. John begs D'Argo not to follow; D'Argo slams past. "Pilot, can you get that trading ship on the phone?" Pilot offers to try, but notes that transmissions are unreliable in this part of Tormented Space. "You can do it, man. You're smart enough. You're good enough. Doggone it, people like you." Obnoxious clichés, now. Everything that bugs about John, this week, is turned around and made awesome. He can't even come up with his own platitudes this week: just his stupid pop culture refs nobody gets. Pilot asks if he's all right. But everything's fine!

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Talikaa approaches D'Argo in a corridor and he yells at her. "What are you doing here? I told you to stay in Chiana's quarters." She snits at him, in monstervision. "I don't have to listen to you. No one else does. Nobody listens to you. They listen to Crichton, but not to you." He does not even have time for that shit: "Get back to those quarters or I will throw you off this ship myself." Talikaa smiles and watches him run off, slamming into Sikozu hard as he goes. She and Noranti stare at Talikaa, who looks back for a second before wandering off. Oh man, do I want to see Sikozu and Talikaa face off. Like Sikozu would start telling the truth about shit and be all, "I can start fires with my hands, I can float short distances into the air, I'm some kind of spy for somebody but also somebody else, and my arms and legs come off like a He-Man. My hair is going to look super-shitty in 'The Peacekeeper Wars.' Also, my eyeballs go like *this*!"

Scorpius's cooling rod brain thing is like a circus ride now, or a spice rack. Lots of rods on a spinning wheel, which contract back into the thing that goes into his brain. This always troubles me on many levels. All the rods in the thing are red, and Sikozu's spinning them. "Noranti seems to think that everyone is acting very strangely," says Sikozu. "HOW CAN YOU TELL?" says everybody. The mechanism stops spinning and Scorpius asks what she thinks about it all. She does...things...with the thing...and says everybody's agitated. "Unusually emotional...everyone except Aeryn." The rods turn blue. "She's colder than usual." The things go back in his head where they belong, as he hisses and acts creepy: "She wills herself against emotions. Like any good soldier." Like any good liar.

Scorpius approaches John's quarters and is privy to a show we've only seen like a hundred times; this time it's ugly. "You. On the table. Right now," says Chiana, straddling John and pushing him down. Chiana's like the strongest person this week because everybody's out of it. Her fake horniness will not be denied! She's like your boyfriend on the way out of *Brokeback Mountain*. Kind of cute, kind of a scary little surprise party in the middle of the evening. (...And that's how beer was invented. Also fraternities.) "Yo, what's gotten into you?!" John tries to resist! But her gay panic is too powerful! "Nothing, yet." She laughs and pushes him down and leans over him. She moves her head around his face, trying to kiss him. "Oh, okay. I just figured out what you need," John laughs, and boy does she get wriggly at that one, "you need a cold shower." Ding, try again. Chiana leans way back, keeping herself strapped in with just

her legs. This is all very confusing, as a viewer. Figures she'd be absolutely the sexiest in the one episode you're not allowed to find her sexy. I think there's something in here about how you must be a good father, or else we'll have more strippers.

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"It's okay," Chiana groans. John wigs. "I asked Aeryn, she said she didn't care about you anyway." She arcs herself back up, leans over him again. Pop goes the bubble; John's scaffold effectively falls down in a crash at this point. "Yes she does," he insists, grabbing her arms again. And Chiana just giggles. "No she doesn't." John promises himself -- this isn't a conversation, it's a monologue -- that he and Aeryn are happy. "She loves me." Scorpius watches still. "Oh, come on. You know you want it." She leans over towards his cheek; this is so gross. Scorpius calls John's name, and he turns his head to the door. "Oh, hey Scorp." Heh. I love John. Chiana invites Scorpius to "watch," and John protests there's nothing to see, finally summoning the strength to push her off him. "We're done. You're leaving." Chiana slaps his hand away and stands. "Hezmana to you. What'd she do, cut 'em off?" Well, kinda. John gets up and rearranges his vest as Chiana approaches Scorpius at the door, angling herself in on him. He growls, but his head does move towards hers. He hisses, pulls himself back; Chiana leaves to go molest somebody else.

"Whoa," John mumbles. "How 'bout that, kids?" He laughs to Scorpius: "Man, she's in overdrive today!" Scorpius looks at him: "She's not alone." John gets out some homework and spreads it on the table. "How are you feeling?" asks Scorpius, in that strange tone where you know it matters. "Good! Never better," John says. His tone is vague and confused, like his brain isn't working right but he hasn't realized it yet. "We got a little thing going on with the traders, but that's not a problem." Scorpius comes closer and addresses him seriously: "We do have a problem. Your crewmates are behaving very oddly." John points out that this is nothing new; this is his lie. Everything is fine. This is the trait that gets them through every awful plan. So much of the books get settled in this episode, I love it. Scorpius tells him Noranti disagrees with this diagnosis, and John -- against all reason -- discounts Noranti's judgment. "We're fine." (There's a twelve-stepper thing that comes up a lot in discussion of this show, w/r/t Aeryn usually and having to do with the shell stuff, that could really just be the title of this episode: "Fucked-up, Insecure, Neurotic and Emotional." Yeah, they're all fucking "fine.") Scorpius points out that a whole host of people are acting weird -- John, Chiana, Aeryn, Rygel, and D'Argo; leaving of course himself and the other creeps on board -- and have been doing so since that girl came to *Moya*. "You think Talikaa is doing a [T'raltixx](#)? A mind-frell? Right, let's go talk to her. Come on, she's in Chiana's quarters." John jumps up and starts for the door; Scorpius is annoyed at this continued bravado, as usual ten steps ahead and seeing how this will play: "No, she isn't. She's disappeared. And we cannot find her."

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Talikaa ducks out of a doorway, appearing to John and Aeryn, who are searching together. She's only just a mirror. John steps forward and Talikaa pulls back, against the wall. "It's all right, it's all right," says John. It's not a conversation. "Everything's gonna be all right, we're not gonna hurt you. Don't be afraid." Talikaa runs off. "We got her," John comms. "Tier three, maintenance bay." John and Aeryn enter the bay; John

softly sing-songing. "Come out, come out, wherever you are." Talikaa watches, monstervision in her bolthole. "Talika," he whispers, as Aeryn cases the ceiling. "It's all right," he whispers to her. "We know she's here." A loud, howling scream rings out in the silence, dropping both John and Aeryn and bathing them in a strange golden light. A giant spider drops from the ceiling and scuttles to them; it puts its nasty feelers on his lovely face. Commercial. What kind of person are you? Are you the kind of person who buys this? Or that? What do our purchases say about us? Nothing. Zhaan goes and gets another Psych degree; Chiana orders up a grip of *Girls Gone Wild*; somebody makes fun of Rachel Ray; everybody flips to PBS.

Aeryn and John wake up on the floor next to each other, stretching their faces and limbs experimentally. Aeryn grimaces and rolls onto her side: "What the frell happened? I heard a scream." They sit up. "Me too. Then the lights went out." Aeryn touches some bumps on John's temple, causing him to jump. "What is that?" She has some too. She touches them and groans. Infection, and now harvest: things very quickly heading down the shitter at this point.

D'Argo follows Chiana, bitching about how this is all her fault; Rygel Jazzies along before them. "In fact, I should have shot her myself!" Chiana tells him, in no uncertain terms, that D'Argo won't be hurting Talikaa; Rygel blathers at length about how everybody owes him and it's high time they paid up. I don't even know what he's talking about. John comms to D'Argo that Talikaa's more dangerous than they thought, and D'Argo is like, "Big surprise," earning a punch on the arm from Chiana. "She's got some kind of scream that knocked us flat," John explains. D'Argo, Chiana, and Rygel continue towards tier three; Talikaa watches them from above. There's a loud screech, and Chiana whirls to look. Over comms, John and Aeryn hear the scream, and a growl, and John calls out for D'Argo. They struggle to get it together and go find the others.

Sikozu meets D'Argo, Chiana, and Rygel's prone bodies on the floor at a junction; Talikaa's touching them with its feelers, harvesting. She notices Sikozu and immediately attacks. Sikozu flees back down the corridor, eventually reaching a dead end. Nice call, Leviathan expert. She jumps into the fan room, negotiating the whirling blades, and then cases the room, terrified. After some long silence with occasional scuttling, the spider drops on her; they scream together. Scorpius hears, in another corridor, and immediately heads toward her, growling.

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The fingers of Sikozu's hand operate mechanically, curling and extending. She's on the other side of the room from it. EEE! Yikes! She reaches toward her arm, and we see that one of her legs is also across the floor. We watch Scorpius enter, from our vantage above the blades, and he growls quietly at Sikozu's brutalized form. Noranti follows him in and they make their way to Sikozu; she rolls back and looks up at him. He leans over her beautiful face and hisses. "I will kill your attacker." Sikozu closes her eyes, quiet. "I promise." He begins to gasp and choke; Noranti orders her to collect Sikozu's parts, implying she can still be saved. I don't know if Scorpius knew that. I certainly didn't. The *what* now? She gets a new power every week. And each is more off-putting than the last!

John staggers behind Aeryn toward Command, Aeryn fretting -- *fretting!* -- about how it's so mysterious that Talikaa is a horrible spider beast: "I don't understand why she's

doing this! I actually felt sorry for her, but she's going to kill us all. We have to *do* something!" There are registers in Claudia Black's range we never heard before. John begs her to calm down, slow down, give him a second. "I feel like crap. Whatever she did knocked the wind outta my sails." Aeryn keeps talking crazy and long: "Listen, we won't have much time, she could be anywhere and we have to find her." Her face is a like a knot in rope, all twists and nonsense; confusion and urgency. "Damn, woman! Would you give it a rest?" He lowers himself and rests his head. "No. No, *please* don't be useless," she...begs. "Don't be useless." She hurries towards the door, more like Howard Hughes right now than you might have thought possible. She's like this close to writing on the walls.

D'Argo staggers in with Chiana, bearing the marks of Talikaa's harvest. "She must have snuck up from behind us," Chiana figures; Aeryn looks at them, all akimbo and migraine-y. Just a pile of broken glass. Chiana whines that she feels "not so right," Rygel agrees. Aeryn begs them not to be weak, still speaking the language of OCD and lots of crazy. "We have to pull ourselves together and we have to fight back." John asks how they can do that: "She kicked our asses! Just give it up!" Aeryn screams some nonsense and runs hysterically from the room. Chiana asks about the damage there, and John just head-desks like he's going to take a wee nap. D'Argo suggests they have a chat with Talikaa and ask her why she'd attack them. Pilot tells him the DRDs haven't found her yet. John's like, "She can probably turn invisible!" Which is funny, but also: hark at Debbie Downer all of a sudden. Pilot mentions that also, the traders are on their way back, and he can't seem to establish communications with them. "Well, their intentions could be hostile," says D'Argo thoughtfully. "Oh course they're hostile!" John whines. "Rygel screwed them, they're coming back to screw us." Rygel hums contentedly: "Then let the traders come. We'll give them everything they want. All the currency we have. It's only brought us conflict anyway."

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Chiana, who was about to wander off, turns around at this, and offers some obnoxious exposition about what's going on, like the altruism anvil just now weren't doing her job for her. "Aeryn is...falling apart," she says, noting everybody else's weirdness, and then there's a stupid beat where D'Argo acts all pacifist -- "I have no *reason* to be angry...with dialogue and compromise..." -- and Chiana stomps his foot a couple of times and grabs his mivonks and proves that something weird is going on, which Scorpius and Noranti have been saying since the episode started. I hate this kind of crap. If you honestly feel like you haven't shown us, the next step isn't to tell us, it's to try harder. So I won't recap. Chiana puts D'Argo's hands on her breasts and he gets goofy about how he can't make out with her in front of John -- and we'll save the whole dissertation on that for right around never -- and she pronounces that the "tralk" has stolen her sex drive.

"I'm the indomitable one! I whistle stupid songs and make dumb plans but somehow I muddle through! America! Fuck yeah!" "I'm the horny one! I'm a sexy girl with no brain or thoughts or feelings! Dress like me at your next convention!" "I'm the anal-retentive! I have a gun! If I ever stopped clenching I'd turn inside out! Women are stupid crying babies! So I'm not a woman!" "I like stuff! Having it, taking it, whatever! I'm just thumbs up on stuff!" "RRRRR! I'm so angry all the time! My oppression and wrongful

imprisonment are whatever! Without my rage, I am just a pussy joke about the sensitive New Age male!" I like the show and I like the characters too much, so we're going to say that this is auto-critique, done on purpose, to show the holes and gaps and persona-caulk they're all going to have to shed to get this season over with. I can admit that it reads just as likely the other way, but: love means never having to say, "You're retarded."

Lots of queasy angles -- the camera work is very subtly off-kilter the whole episode, but this scene in particular adds a grotty tinge to the unbalanced whole -- as Noranti and Scorpius squish Sikoze's severed limbs back into place. She's the objective correlative, and that's the reason she doesn't need to come up against Talikaa like the rest: she's not an arm, or a hand, or a leg, or a foot. Take them away, she's still Sikoze. The thing about this show is the ease with which they take the abstract and shove it, nastily concrete, down your throat. It's like *Buffy* to the infinite power, but with a serious (and unsettling!) biological focus. And since Sikoze is the only one that can literally have a new physiological trait every week, the burden falls to her: Remove an arm, a leg, a hand, a foot. Remove the lie of sexual wholeness, the lie of rage -- how could D'Argo, of all people, how could Lo'Laan's husband, ever think *rage* was his strongest trait? -- take the lie of bravado, the lie of consumption without strategy. She's still Sikoze. You're still you.

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Pilot comms John that the signal isn't getting to the traders' ship, but that the ship in question seems to be drifting. D'Argo figures that they're powered down to give a no-aggression signal, since they can't communicate, and orders Pilot to bring them into the bay. Chiana yells at Pilot about locating "that frelling Talikaa," and Pilot can only say that her movements are "extraordinary": "The moment a DRD locates her, she's gone again." Aeryn chooses this moment to run in and attack Chiana out of nowhere, acting like a total freak. John grabs her; D'Argo does a hilarious talking-stick kind of move where he lowers the floor with his hands and goes, "Whoooooa. Whoooooa. Settle." Aeryn chills out and apologizes. The hanger door opens; the trader ship's door has lowered its steps. One of the bastards come staggering out and falls, choking quietly. D'Argo -- to the accompaniment of Rygel's charitable horror -- rushes over to check him out. His face is covered in sores and he dies. Talikaa watches, unseen, from beneath the ship, as John realizes that's the end of this particular story, for them.

Commercial, and then a DRD checking out the dead trader. D'Argo heads into the trader ship with Aeryn and Rygel, and Chiana, whose facial sores have gotten much worse during the commercial. Inside, there are dead traders all over the place. Chiana looks close at one while D'Argo checks everything out: "This is what we got to look forward to?" She turns his head with the muzzle of her gun -- the sores have eaten away the bottom side of his face and neck. It's so gross. Rygel thinks they won't have to wait all that long, which of course sets Aeryn off: "Don't say that, we're gonna be fine." Her sores have gotten darker and begun latticing down her cheek. "We're gonna be fine, we're gonna find something, we're gonna figure it all out and we are going to be fine." She climbs up the ladder to the ship's second tier, breathing harder than usual.

D'Argo, up there with her, gets his arm grabbed by the head trader, who's looking nasty. Aeryn can't even deal with it; D'Argo asks him what's up and he just chokes and looks awful. Chiana heads into another room, where Rygel has found a hologram running: A [Diagnosian](#), trilling and squeaking, as a man speaks translation, breaking sporadically into static. *"I now have information on the symptoms you've described. They're caused by the Wolaxan Arachnid. This creature's touch infects its victims and stimulates exaggerated neural functioning."* Chiana: "[Duh.]" D'Argo joins them. *"The creature then transforms, harvests that energy from its host, stores it in membrane orbs, and hides those orbs in an external nest for later consumption. Finding that nest and opening the orbs in proximity to the victims will allow reassimilation of the energy, and complete recovery..."* The hologram disappears, finished. The complicated biological cycles of the creatures in this show, I will never understand it. Just the hoops they have to jump through to get to the emotional part, I guess, but the whole -- speaking of Diagnosians -- the whole nose-and-mouth-at-the-same-time thing? What is that about? I still don't know.

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Aeryn freaks out that the hologram is over and starts screaming about how they need to know how to kill it, which means she hasn't been paying attention at all, since that's the point of the episode. Not killing the spider, but getting your shit back. The spider's propaganda, just another living thing -- the orbs are the reality, what they need. And of course it's [orbs](#), because it always is. What you call a man's mojo; what Chiana accused John of having lost. Biology, I said. D'Argo -- who's in a curious place *qua* "orbs" today -- explains that killing Talikaa isn't the problem, and Aeryn gets right in his face: "You think she's not going to try and defend her nest?" He just sighs, put out, prompting her to ask, "*What?*" Aeryn On The Edge Of A Nervous Breakdown is equal parts hilarious and disturbing. He just tells her to relax and walks off; Chiana watches her, thinking.

Sikozu lies on her back, eyes closed, limbs attached, as Noranti gives her smelling salts and whispers her name. She shakes her head and wakes, groaning, and then has a total freaking panic attack. Noranti tells Scorpius to hold onto her, and he straddles her while they try to calm her down. Noranti explains about the Wolaxian arachnid and tells her she's safe. "Lie still." Sikozu starts crying about her arm and leg, and it's actually kind of touching, but Noranti assures her the limbs should be fine. Noranti asks why Talikaa would attack her -- its MO being to "harvest neural energy" -- and surmises that Sikozu's immune to the spider. Scorpius, inches from her face, begins to choke as she agrees she's immune (and no more). Scorpius gags and thrashes, worrying Sikozu. It's always so weird to see him out of sorts. Aeryn's the control freak, but seeing Scorpius without total control is so much more frightening. Like that shit at the beginning of the season, with Leather Daddy Braca and Mistress Grayza? How fucked was that?

"Yes, he's infected but not harvested," Noranti explains, fully *patting* Scorpius on the shoulder and saying loudly, "She's doing well, Scorpius. You may leave her now," and then *shoving* him off Sikozu. He rolls over across the floor next to her and finally stands up. Noranti is the 900-year-old Grandmother Without Fear. "The Scarran in him is growing stronger," she explains, "overcoming his Sebacean personality." So that explains why you'd be so cavalier with him. I mean, Scorpius is already the

scariest thing in the entire universe, I don't know why you wouldn't find his complete loss of rationality and sense draining away to be totally cuddly and fun. Scorpius starts to freak out, all spitting (so much saliva in this scene!) and growling and doing weird Wolfman movements. Sikoze assures Noranti loudly that he won't hurt them -- "I *know* him" -- and Scorpius flounders around some more. Noranti explains that Sikoze's talking only about his Sebacean side. I think Noranti is being kind, not to say naïve, about their sex life. Scorpius uses the Scarran growly voice in some crazy talk and then says, "*Kill it now.*" Noranti approaches, explaining about how they need to find the orbs -- they couldn't just say "eggs," no, because it's all about bluster this week -- and Scorpius insists: "*Kill it now.*" She looks up at him, flopping and drooling, and there's great respect in her voice: "Forgive me, Scorpius." She blows a handful of Granny Blow in his face, earning herself a backhand, and goes down. Scorpius starts towards her, frothin' all on the mouth, and Sikoze screams, but the powder hits him, and he finally drops.

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Aeryn and the others come back out of the trader ship; she joins John on the floor. Pilot informs them that the DRDs last spotted Talikaa in the Neural Cluster, but of course she's on the go, and they can't find her orbs anywhere. John pronounces them "screwed" and Chiana tells him to cut it out -- nice of her to resent it, considering he keeps her going a lot of the time -- and Aeryn goes haywire some more: "Well we can't be like this, we have to focus, all right, I say we team up, we start in the Neural Cluster and we search every tier ourselves." Talikaa watches as Chiana vows either to find their mojo or kill her, and D'Argo mealy-mouthing that maybe they could persuade her to return them, and Rygel considering the persuasive benefits of shooting her ass in the eye.

Aeryn reaches down to help John up; he's dizzy and falls back down. Right into a k-hole, in fact. He reaches up to touch her hair, and looks at her beautiful face from the depth of all emo. "You know what the worst part of this is? You and me. We never could get it together." He swallows. "Now we never will." Wait, you mean dropping the bullshit that you keep around you like rags in order to keep your self-destructive pride intact is a great way to get what you actually want, because people actually respond to reality? Thanks, Talikaa! "Strongest trait" or not, the thing that makes you awesome is the thing that makes you suck. Aeryn tells him quickly and loudly, from her benzo fog, never to say anything of the sort again, and then drags him out of the room. Oh, shit! I just remembered the end of this episode and it is *so awesome*! Talikaa runs into the trader ship after everybody's gone and starts flipping switches. Spider people, I tell you. They do like their mischief.

D'Argo follows some DRDs down a corridor; his breathing is obviously compromised. Pilot informs him about the trader ship's engines firing up and he realizes it's Talikaa; Pilot can't get the bay doors closed in time, and even as D'Argo's running back to the bay, Pilot tells him she's gone. D'Argo comms to everybody to get onboard *Lo'La*, "and fast," and Aeryn -- still hauling John bodily -- starts over that way. John hurls himself at a wall and begs her to leave him behind. She reaches out and touches his ravaged face; he leans into it sweetly and then steels himself: "No. Forget about me and go." (Like, what help could he possibly be, if Talikaa were actually on the trader ship, which she's obviously not? He's going to hold down the "sweating and whining"

role on *Lo'La* while everybody else takes care of business? Come to think of it, why the hell are they even taking Rygel? And meanwhile Scorpius and Sikoze and Noranti, all of whom are really good at like a billion things, don't even exist.) I guess since they're all dying from some horrible spiderbite plague they want to be together, so it's the whole family. And also, they are all crazy right now. For whatever reason, she takes a second to think about it before leaving John to piss and moan on the floor.

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Aeryn sits in *Lo'La*'s jump seat, suggesting that they not fuck around: "We should probably get this done quite quickly." Rygel passes helium loudly, and everybody looks sad. Now for like ten reasons plus one.

John stares at himself in a mirror shard: "Damn it, boy. Make yourself useful. Come on." That's one of my favorite parts of the episode, because we've all done it. I give myself those pep talks like twice a day. It all started with *Cruel Intentions*. But also, because of the whole Talikaa mirror thing, like, all they've ever done is give themselves these pep talks and call it reality. But sometimes that's what it takes, and it's a very specific kind of soldier grace that allows you to pull that extra piece of spark out and cowboy up, and I love John Crichton, so...

D'Argo sighs some more -- if instead of Jool, in "Unrealized Realities," he'd been Zhaan, I think he would have acted a lot like he does in this episode -- and closes in on the trader ship: "Their weapons aren't charged up and they're not taking any evasive action. Should be easy to board." Rygel points out that they're maybe walking into a trap, and D'Argo agrees. "Rygel, you stay here and watch that scanner. If it senses any movement, comm us." Chiana starts to apologize all about bringing Talikaa onboard and once more promises to kill "that tramp" herself. That's twice; twice she's called her a whore. "Trelk" and the like are sparingly used, on this show, always with a reason more than the fact that hatred of women is America's pastime. There's always a reason. What's the name of the episode again? She thought it was as simple as dancing with her breakage; as simple as reaching out and saving somebody, instead of doing the hardest work and saving herself. She got her hand bit. She learned her lesson. Calling Talikaa a whore is, for lack of a better word, therapeutic: my side, your side. There's nothing therapeutic in seeing those men's faces eaten and melting, but she needed this episode to tell her that. She's not Talikaa and she never was, because Talikaa wasn't innocent, and she had nothing taken from her: what they did to her (what she was willing to do with Chiana) was commerce, and those assholes paid right up. What seemed like a mirror was just another enemy. D'Argo, Aeryn, and Chiana check the vessel carefully, with flashlights; Rygel confirms there's no movement beyond theirs. Bodies everywhere. Chiana can't figure it out (too angry), but D'Argo does (not angry). "Frell. The guidance system's been activated. This ship's set to fly itself." Aeryn spells it out: "She never left *Moya*."

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John lies around, having taken to his bed. D'Argo comms him the whole story. "We're heading back now, but we're very weak. You have to find those energy orbs." Which was exactly what he was saying in the last scene! To himself!

Commercial, I think, and then John's still in bed. Depression is the inability to think your way around a dead engine. The opposite of optimism. Complete lack of motivation and the inability to find a compelling way around the issue. The systemic

inability to remember any of the tools in your toolbox or how to use them. It's not about being sad, it's about being nothing much of anything, and not remembering how you used to get yourself out of the hole; how you've done it every time before. Has there been an episode where John's clinical depression wasn't obvious to the naked eye? It's not that it didn't exist; it's that now he can't compensate. Maybe that's all Talikaa's really about.

Noranti comes upon him and yanks him out of bed. He fully tries to crawl back in! She grabs him and asks if he's ready to die. If he's ready to watch Aeryn die. He finally sits up, on the edge of the bed. Noranti tells him Plan A. Plan A won't work: "She could've hid them anywhere. *Moya's* huge. We'll never find 'em." He begins to slump; she grabs him again. Plan B: "That's it! Talikaa is the only one who knows where they are." Plan B won't work: "Yeah, so we're dead. She's never gonna tell us." This is depression in action; they should show this at workshops. Plan C: "But maybe we can get her to show us where they are." Before he can pooh-pooh Plan C, she sparks his interest again with the news that Scorpius is infected, but not harvested. Interesting that the only way she can get a rise out of him is with Aeryn and Scorpius. She explains that he's knocked out, so maybe Talikaa just can't sense him, "even though he is ripe and ready for her." John clears his head: Wake him up, use him as bait, and "let her harvest his mojo." Noranti nods. "What about Sikoze?" John asks. Noranti fudges: "Well, she's strong enough to help, I'm sure." He looks into her eyes(es) and comms: "D. We may not be dead...yet." Aeryn swallows and makes a face; D'Argo kindly replies that it sounds like John's maybe getting back to his old self. "We should be back to you within an arn."

So all of a sudden the episode's about John, even though it started out being pretty memorably about Chiana? Nope. When did the laka start? Right around the time John got raped. And now he's gone off the drugs, and all of a sudden he's depressed. It's got story logic and a spider lady behind it, but it's not the weirdest story ever told in space. It was always about both of them: facing up. This is John and Aeryn we're talking about; easy or hard: there's someone else in the room, and it's Grayza. Why on earth would he let her go again, coin toss or not? She pulled back, Harvey's Lovely Daughter, but she's been trying her damndest all season long to get him back, and he's been standing behind a laka curtain, quietly drowning. Grayza took something from him, even adjusting for the difference in gender experience, and it was power. Did wonders for his wormhole abilities; wreaked havoc on his life. (For extra credit, compare Scorpius with Talikaa in this instance: the things he willingly traded to Grayza for what he wanted are the same things she took from John by force. John and Chiana are innocent; Scorpius and Talikaa are whores.) John laughed off Chiana's scary advances; he could only do it, without seeing the shattering beneath it, because it was too close to his own shit. "She likes me," he said. "Things are gonna be fine," he said.

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Sikoze holds something up to Scorpius's mouth, and makes him swallow. His jaws close on her finger and he's very Scarran right now; Sikoze gasps but it could be a sex thing for all we know. "Wake up, Scorpius," she whispers. "We need you." I do believe they care about each other. It's nice to imagine that he's 100% like he is, but that doesn't fit this show at all. That's a square peg for such a wonderful character.

We'll never know if he or Talikaa suffered in their own way for what they gave up, for what was lost: maybe it was just a transaction, maybe not, but we'll never know, and that's how it goes with bug people. Scorpius jerks and snarls and flops and comes around; he grabs Sikoze by the throat. "You don't want to hurt me, Scorpius," she chokes out. "I'm an ally." "*Si...ko...zu?*" he growls, in a whisper. "Yes, Scorpius." He growls and sits up; she gasps and whimpers quietly. "*Arachnid?...Kill it.*" And Sikoze nods, and she is beautiful: "Yes, Scorpius. It's time to kill it." She smiles, he clambers to his feet. He picks her up in his arms like Frankenstein's Monster. At her small cry, he looks down at her: "*Help.*" And with that, he carries her out of the fan room. I don't get those two.

John loads a gun; elsewhere, Noranti comes upon Talikaa as though by accident in a corridor. "What's your hurry, old one?" asks Talikaa; Noranti backs away. "Keep away from me," she says. The smartest thing Noranti ever taught them was to pretend weakness when strength wasn't a possibility; it's one of the things she inherited from Zhaan. "I don't want you," Talikaa smiles. "You're old and bitter. You know who I do want. Where is he?" Noranti shakes and shivers and gasps, oh so afraid: "I don't know anything." Talikaa calls her a liar. "You know where he is. Scorpius. Tell me or die." Noranti gets very sassy. "If I don't tell you, you die." She gestures to the creature and heads off down a corridor; Talikaa senses him. What does Scorpius smell like? I bet he doesn't smell terrible, like you might think at first. I prefer to think that Scorpius smells like Tabasco sauce and pipe tobacco. Just like my dear old grandfather, if you add Old Spice and whiskey. I think Zhaan smelled like sage and amber, because she is a vegetable but also a lifestyle liberal, and I think Aeryn smells like vanilla pods and the inside of a DVD player. I think my cold is going away but I'm still a little wuzzy, but I realize that, so let's move on.

So much spittle is coming out of Scorpius right now that he is like *Old Yeller* on ten TVs at once. Sikoze watches him get tagged by Talikaa, who somehow fights her way through the spitstorm he is sending out in all directions, and then they make animal noises and fight; she finally hits him with the golden glowy scream and does the whole harvest thing. Sikoze comms to John that she's harvesting him; John finally finishes with his gun.

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Talikaa climbs up something with the Scorpius blob and hangs it with the others. They're hanging in these, um... they're hanging from the ceiling. And they glow bright green, which is why you should not use steroids, only they are the size of footballs. Sikoze's new-old leg is not entirely helpful and she's gasping trying to follow Talikaa, half on her knees. "Found it. Tier seven, the cargo bay." John, with a nod to getting it together: "I'm never gonna make it." But still he tries, and leaves his chamber for tier seven. Sikoze drags her leg -- she is not her leg; John's dragging something you can't see but is just as damaged -- into the room.

John stumbles into the bay and spots Sikoze; he puts his gun down and addresses the air. "I know you can see me. The bad guys always see me. 'Cause my plans suck. People die. It's always a mess." Talikaa's like, "Oh, right! Crichton! Hi!" She smiles down at him from behind the girder. "Yeah, that's me. The dumb-ass. I help someone, and they screw me." She explains that there's no room for remorse in this pussy party: "You are food, and I eat." "There's always an excuse, lady." She asks if the others are

also going to come to kill her, and he assures her it's just him and her. She starts to climb down. "I was planning on grabbing those nads there, but I guess you're not gonna let me do that, are ya?" She joins him on the floor and gives her regrets.

Behind her, Sikozy makes her way toward the orbs.

"I'm tired. Let's...why don't we just end it?" John sighs, and sinks to his knees. "Come on. I'm tired. I'm tired of worrying. I'm tired of fighting. Just bring it on. End it now."

Sikozy begins to gather the orbs. "Do you want me to kill you?" Talikaa asks, as though she's heard this a million times before, which of course she has. "Yes, please. Fast, slow... lady's choice." She kneels in front of him -- "I like it slow" -- and chitters at him like a horrible bug. He falls back onto the floor and shouts, "Oh God, I was afraid you were gonna say that. Bring it on." She informs him that it has already been broughten. She makes the noise again and leans down. He's tired. He's not kidding. Things are not fine.

Sikozy yells, arms still all up in the orbs: "Crichton! Don't let her!" Talikaa drops John and heads for Sikozy, who gasps and turns back to the orbs. She tries to hit Sikozy with the scream but it doesn't quite connect; John grabs his machine gun and aims at Talikaa. She turns back and screams, but too late. He shoots at her and she turns into the giant spider. "Whoa. Freaky." That's all we can ask of him right now. He shoots her again. He yells encouragement to Sikozy and continues to shoot at the attacking spider. He finally just shoves the gun in her mouth and pulls the trigger. I'm saying that of all the ways he could have solved the monster problem this week, *he shoves the gun in her mouth and pulls the trigger*. I wasn't fucking around with the depression talk above. She lights up from inside and explodes for awhile, and then John cracks another lame joke ("Along came a spider / Exploded beside her") and passes out.

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Later, three excellent scenes for the tag. Noranti is stirring a bubbling pot and Rygel and D'Argo discuss at length how delicious her "roasted spider soup" is, and Rygel acts greedy, and D'Argo cracks a joke about demonstrating for him how angry he can get. It's all very whatever, but there's something very powerful about the fact that they're *eating the spider*. It's not just a gross joke: it's the necessary ending to this story. It's been there from the beginning of time, from the beginning of stories, this idea of eating the beast, of actually taking it on and accepting that it's just a mirror. The only things that can scare you are the things you haven't realized are a part of you, and then you chow down. Roasted spider soup is the best way of telling yourself, and the universe, that it was never a conversation, just a monologue. The worst thing she could do to you, you were already doing to yourself, while telling yourself you had no idea. Spider soup: Crais comes on board, and Scorpius appears; Scorpius comes on board, and Grayza appears. You Yensch, you get bigger, and somehow you get through it, and you are whole again. Delicious!

Sikozy knows, listen: "What's worse? Having us see that you are half-Scarran, or remembering it yourself?" And so does Scorpius: "I *know* what I am, Sikozy. This interlude was simply a fortuitous, though troubling, reminder." They sit around being creepy. "If you want my help," she finally says, "the price is inclusion...and honesty." Scorpius breathes in, tight in the chest. "Price" he knows how to spell, but the rest...that's like four things he's never heard of, right there.

Fuck yeah! So Aeryn's sitting in a corridor, against a wall, staring at a bulb of laka distillate. John walks up to her just in time for a faceful: "Do you have any idea what you've done?" He shrugs and walks off, "mojo" back in place: "*You* won the coin toss," right, with that "your loss" pettiness in it. Aeryn stands very quickly in a Peacekeeper kind of way, but her words..."But we lost. Didn't we?" He stops and turns to her. "Aeryn. It's over." She shakes her head. "So your mind is now so full of this dren that you can't even see straight, is that it?" He can't really look her in the eye. "Move on, Aeryn." She won't. And she won't let him. He's a shapeshifter. "You see, I did everything. *Everything* I could, to keep us together. I did exactly what you told me to do, and the whole time you have been...*cheating*." The outrage at the end, like this game has rules. "Yeah, I'm a coward. Move on. It's over." She gets right up in his face, shaking, powerful: "No, I'm gonna tell you how this is gonna go, from now on. You are going to stop sniffing this dren..." She waves the laka at him and he pushes past, cutting her off. "Shut up." She gets physically aggressive: "Don't you tell me to shut up!" He ignores her. "Pilot, my comms are a bit buggy. Can you test the system, please?" Pilot replies that he will, but it'll take comms offline for half a minute. "Thought so. That'll be fine, thank you." The comms beep off.

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John points at Aeryn and gets close. "Shut up and listen to me. Scorpius is here, looking for the key to what is inside my head. Neural chips, Aurora Chair, threatening Earth. None of it works, because he does not understand me." She begins to weep. "Stop using him as an excuse!" She gets some fingers in her face. "*Please!* You're the key. My Achilles. You. If he figures that out, the world, and all that's in it, is nothing. He will use you and the baby, and I will not be able to stop him." Plan B doesn't work: "You think he's been using the comms? Look what it's done to you! You're completely paranoid." He stares at her in the silence for a moment, and then: the crackle of static. Scorpius: "Pilot? Are we having a problem with the comms?" Pilot apologizes. Aeryn's mouth hangs open. She turns to John, flabbergasted, afraid. They have a whole conversation using only their eyeballs, and it is wonderful. "So," she says, well too loudly, "it's over." He looks up, then away: "It's over." She begins to grin. "There's nothing more between us," she says, looking up at his face. He smiles back, lopsided and lovely. "Nothing," he whispers. Figures they'd do even this ass-backward, warding off the evil eye and saying love is nothing.

Aeryn tears up, joyful and relieved. The happiest among us, for the moment. She bites her lip and looks deeply into his face, into his eyes. Naked, finally. Four years and counting, dead lovers piled up between them, fear and resentment and longing and terror and confusion and pride: gone. A symphony of waiting ends. Finally. John laughs to himself, and grins; they kiss. She silently puts her arms around his neck, her forehead to his; they nuzzle noses and grin, too full of joy to do anything but touch. "I love you," she says silently, and he smiles, and they kiss again.

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This episode and the next hearken back to good old, bad old Season Three, in that they follow the same timeframe with two split teams. I really, really like the other one. But this one's fine too. All the boys -- John, D'Argo, Scorpius, and Rygel -- are going to Man Camp, and the girls -- Aeryn, Chiana, Sikozu, and Noranti -- are going...shopping. Before those red flags go up, though, remember this is *Farscape*, which means that this week all the boys will go on and on about their feelings, and next week the girls will blow hell out of all kinds of things. Everybody else is already on *Lo'La* and a transport pod, waiting for John and Aeryn.

There's Pilot in his usual place, and at the base of his station there's John, and sitting between his legs there's Aeryn. The Lovers. Finally. Aeryn gives John a gift -- Christmas was felled, remember -- and looks back sweetly to see his reaction as he opens it. It's a remote control. Her smile is bigger than her face. "Merry Christmas," she says ironically, and they laugh. "Is there something that comes with this?" She tells him there is, and it's huge -- taking over his room, in fact -- and John loudly tells Pilot he's changed his mind: "Tell them we're not coming." He tells Aeryn his plan, to stay in bed and watch TV, eat popcorn and "act like normal people." Evil eye! Evil eye! Stop being happy! John fiddles with the remote control, about half as in love with it as he is with her.

Pilot calls them back to reality, name-dropping "Captain D'Argo" as an aid to his point, and John sighs. "Gotta go. I gotta go look after Scorpius." She leans back into him, saying they should do it together, and he reminds her that's the one thing they can't do together, or else the jig would be up. "Besides," he says to her exasperated sigh, "you've got to look after the girls." They argue over which is suckier, girl time or "Mental Arts Training Camp," and Aeryn niggles him that he could really use some mental discipline, but he exposit that this is going to be coming from a friend of Scorpy's. "You got the better job," he whines. We'll see about that. She's not sold either: "Rummaging around on a dead Leviathan settlement, looking for a *Moya* part? Oh, that's infinitely more thrilling." Hee, I love that. "A *Moya* part." Never let it be said that the technobabble overwhelmed us. Pilot tells them that Chiana's bugging him for Aeryn now, which is ten times more serious than D'Argo, because Chiana is annoying. John and Aeryn kiss and say goodbye, and wish each other a Merry Christmas. They're so cute they'll probably *both* die at this point. Like right there in Pilot's den. Boom.

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Lo'La heads across a planet's surface toward a geodesic dome, glowing, with fences and search lights all around. "You have all come to my dwelling to learn. Your objective is mental discipline," says Scorpius's friend, who is wearing a gray robe and the bridge of his nose goes all the way up his face. There are other men besides our guys, all wearing blue robes and listening to him on benches; Scorpius, as the fashion plate of Tormented Space, is not wearing the uniform. "To focus your whole mind on a

single task is a skill few ever achieve." Especially with the *Moya* crew's chronic ADD. D'Argo cracks a joke to John and you can see their temples have been tinily Bedazzled.

"The taskchairs provide access to a mindscape, where you'll compete with an opponent. To the point of great pain." Rygel sighs, though it's not clear whether he's more irritated by the pain part or the smurfiness of a grown man saying the word "mindscape" in all seriousness. "Embrace the pain, and you shall succeed." Scorpius nods, like, "Word." This episode is like a forty-five-minute music video for the song "Scorpius Is Pretty Awesome (Y'all Are All Haters)." The dude warns them that retreat will earn them some "consequences." Welcome to every awful memory of P.E. you ever tried to forget. There's a fuckin' "mindscape" for you. The man shows them an open icosahedron, all lit up. Also the room is covered in lights that made the actors sick because they are *everywhere*, and basically the whole room is lights and wires and some benches. Inside the apparatus are the two taskchairs. "If you have any self-doubt, you have eighty microts to exit, after which your Juxtowi crystal will be activated." John touches his Bedazzling for our benefit. "Any attempt to leave and the crystal will bore through your brain." Emphasis on *bore*.

D'Argo whispers: "Do you think it's worth going through with this?" John -- again, for our benefit -- says it's worth it because the dude (Katoya) might be able to tell them something about the Skreeth, which killed DK and attacked the Crichtons and stole Christmas. "The creature you described is neither Peacekeeper nor Scarran in origin," Scorpius exoposits, under his breath. "If it is from Tormented Space, Katoya will know about it." A mysterious dude in a gray robe enters with the hood around his face. Rygel asks why the frell Katoya won't just tell them, considering they paid the full fee for Man Camp; Katoya fully listens to them talking. Scorpius, also Bedazzled, explains that the price for this info is completion of the course itself. Which sounds stupid, but looking back, isn't even necessarily true, because it's Scorpius and he's got like five games he's running here, as usual.

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John points one finger in the air: "Excuse me. Question. Before we commit to your class..." Katoya interrupts and asks if John's afraid of the pain he's been talking about nonstop throughout the scene. "Look, I can put up with the fairy crystal and the jammies, but I need to know what else we get with the gym membership." While this question -- which never gets answered, because it's not a real question -- is being asked, D'Argo is having a major flip-out. He smells a smell, which it would seem he began to smell when the mysterious dude entered the room, and then inside his head there's a man's face, and then a flash of Lo'Laan, his wife, and then the face again, with a fist in the air. "What the blitz is that smell?" he asks, and Rygel offers that it's "the stench of that frelling Charrid." Charrids look like if Predator had a face. "No," D'Argo shakes his head. "I know that odor." John sees the dude take off his hood, and D'Argo freaks out and jumps up, screaming, "**Macton!**" Dude, Macton is *hot!* I wasn't expecting that at all; he looks like Heath Ledger's older, more financially stable brother. John tries to grab D as Katoya watches from the sidelines. D'Argo smacks Macton about the face, all, "You killed my wife!" and then picks him up off the floor. John tries to rush D'Argo, but Katoya grabs him: "This is not your fight." Macton's like, "My sister that you killed? That wife?" D'Argo accuses him of framing

him and sending him to prison, but Macton's like, "Please. You didn't want the truth then, and you're not interested in it now." I promise to remember how this actually goes this time. The last part of this episode is always like a blur for some reason. I spent most of Season One afraid that D'Argo actually killed her. Which maybe he did, maybe he didn't, but we'll know by the end of the episode, and then I'll probably forget again.

John pushes past Katoya and runs to D'Argo, pulling him back and begging him to chill. John hanging from his arm like a tiny little girlfriend, D'Argo continues to front on Macton, who's all, "Ahh, let him hit me! Like he hit Lo'Laan! Beat his own wife to death!" How come the storied hyper-rage, about which this episode *is*, doesn't kick in at any point in this episode? I mean, how come it doesn't take? This is totally the dude who ruined his whole life and got his son put into slavery. Come on. D'Argo tosses John away and rushes Macton, who easily flips him onto the floor. Even Rygel is like, "Snap!" D'Argo gets back up once again and comes at Macton. They do some fighting stuff for awhile, and then Katoya Jedis them across the floor in different directions.

"That ends this," he says. THE END!

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Wait, nope. THE CREDITS.

John, D'Argo, and Rygel sit alone at dinner, having made their usual amount of friends. John sits on the table, D'Argo sits on a bench beside it; John asks if he's okay, "Bro." D'Argo snits about how Macton's a frelling liar. And Rygel's like, "First of all, duh. He's a frelling Peacekeeper; but also secondly, *he's a frelling Peacekeeper*, here, now, so we need to get the fuck out." Scorpius appears at the top of the stairs that lead down into the refectory and tells them they aren't permitted to "leave the compound prematurely." Rygel isn't feeling this, because why would Katoya care when he's got their money, because that's how Rygel rolls. Scorpius comes all the way down and says they're in for the long haul, bound by the rules. John says frell the rules, they're not about to "stick around 'til a Marauder lands," but Scorpius gets all intimate with him, whispering, "This sector of Tormented Space is forbidden to Peacekeepers, unless they have received express orders from First Command." Meaning Macton's there unofficially, dealing with his own shit, I assume. Or else somehow he's there for them, which is John's worry, and D'Argo's like, "I'll ask how he found us right before I totally kill him." Scorpius hisses directly into D'Argo's grill and says Katoya won't let them kill each other. "To Hezmana with Katoya! Macton deserves to die!" He takes a breath and then tears up and reminds us why. Again. Even though we just covered that.

Then: Lo'Laan tries to reason with Macton: "He loves me! You mustn't do anything, D'Argo's done nothing to me." Macton's not buying. Their house was beautiful. "You refuse to see him for what he really is." A Luxan warrior, she says proudly. "...And he cannot help but hurt you." Lo'Laan promises that they could never hurt each other; D'Argo listens outside the room with his arms crossed. Macton gives up and leaves, walking past D'Argo in the shadows. "Good to see you, *brother*." Macton walks off without a word, and D'Argo goes in to his wife.

Now D'Argo takes a deep breath and explains again about how Macton is going to be dying. John promises D he's got his back, but he figures Scorpius is telling the truth. "Katoya won't let us disrupt his class. You'll deal with Macton when school is out." He

has changed so, so much since the beginning. I can't mourn it, but it's sad nonetheless. Katoya buzzes the compound and orders them back to the arena. John pats D'Argo's shoulder in support. "Recess is over."

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Katoya, only a tad snippy: "Now that calmer minds prevail... A demonstration." He leans into John's face: "Join me." John says he's just there to watch and Katoya tells him everyone's going to be participating. My mom used to drag me to this shit all the time. I hate camp. I hate nature. I mean, it wasn't *just* like this, there was always nature. Horrible *plus*. No *Tron* bullshit. That wouldn't have been so bad. The phrase "everyone must participate" sends a shock down my spine to this day. But John's got a way better excuse than asthma: "After the probes, land mines, corkscrews I've had in my head? I ain't offering up a chunk for your mind games." Totally should have gone for the neurochip excuse. So much less Story Circle after you drop that bomb, I bet. "It is not a game," says Katoya. It's a state of mind! "Ain't gonna happen, Miss Krabapple. Fail me, give me an F on my report card, but I ain't goin' in your icosahedron." Katoya looks over at Scorpius sharply, like, "Who's your sister here?" And Scorpius stands, volunteering. "Yes, of course." John claims that this proves nothing, *Grasshopper*, but nobody entirely believes that, including us. Scorpius and Katoya sit in the taskchairs, arms held out by their frames, which suddenly clank inward like the scary carnival on the bad side of town, and there's buzzing, and then: *mindscape*! They're standing in a small arena, visible on the wall outside as well, surrounded by yet more lights. A ball forms of light and hangs in the air between them, glowing orangey red and looking like BS. Katoya and Scorpius do mysterious movements of willpower and the ball moves around, and apparently it hurts, and it goes on forever. "Pain," says John. "See, that's what I'm talkin' about: pain." You have no idea what you are in for. The glow-thing comes toward Scorpius's face and he pulls back, like it's hot, and then he does mysterious movements of willpower and it flies across the arena to Katoya, who stops it. This is like one of those horrible "Ungames" therapists and Wiccans play with their own defenseless kids: "*Feel* the energy. Do you *feel* it?" My *flashbacks* are having flashbacks. If they start with the cones I am outta here.

Anna: "There are like two people who are going to get that joke."

Jacob: "But they'll be so grateful."

Anna: "I don't even get that joke."

Jacob: "One, you've met my mom, so yes you do. And two, *it's no joke*."

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More Tronball, Katoya tells Scorpius to try again, I guess he does, I don't know what they're up to exactly. "Do not withhold your efforts." Scorpius glares and hisses and spits. "Nor is anger a substitute for clarity. The task may be completed with a minimum of physical harm." More Tronball. Scorpius ends up face to face with the icosahedron, which is saying in a tiny red voice, *nonononononononono*. Ben Browder is officially hotter than Bruce Boxleitner, but that's like saying infinity is officially larger than the biggest number you can think of. Katoya finally offers to end the demonstration, what with all the creepy grunting of Scorpius, but he's all, "I was just starting to enjoy the pain," which makes Katoya laugh. He earths the energy or whatever and everybody

stares at everybody else. "Well, that was instructive," John says to Scorpius, who has rejoined them. "Kinda lead with your chin there." Heh. Scorpius assures him it's not meant to be painless, and that means it is meant to suck. I mean, I love the whole concept and this episode doesn't bug me in that way -- mostly it just drags -- but how the fuck are you gonna try and give John Crichton the Hard Knocks speech? He's been driven absolutely crazy about fifteen times. He knows from Hard Knocks. On the other hand, a poetic reminder never hurt: "It never will be painless, John." John bounces with a "Huh."

John finds Macton standing in the refectory, and decides to ask what the hell he's doing there. Macton's like, "D'Argo said I was supposed to die horribly, so..." John's not interested: "Oh. See, I was just wonderin' why you followed me to the bathroom." Point: Crichton. Macton, not getting the subtleties, continues the convo: "I don't want to kill D'Argo, but I won't allow him to kill me to conceal what he did. He killed his wife." John demurs, but Macton pushes: "Do you know what Luxan hyper-rage is?" [Oh boy does he](#). Weirdly, it's more homoerotic than Macton following you into the head. "You know what a 'crock' is? D'Argo says he didn't do it, that's good enough for me." Macton tries to explain: "He may not *know* what he did." (Don't we already know that there are accompanying blackouts? The episode seems to think we don't.) "Right," snits John. "Eight cycles and change, just...*zoop!* Slips his mind." Macton notifies John about the blackouts, and his exit line is all, "Any honest Luxan can tell you that." Well, well! Guess that solves that.

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Katoya watches the students return to their benches, and nods to the Charrid behind Macton. "Please." The Charrid grunts and approaches the taskchairs. Rygel grumbles that he'd love to take the Charrid on -- I guess I forget why that's such a big deal -- and gets very big for his froggy little Sparky britches: "I'd show him some real pain." Boys, I don't know what to do about them. John sits down next to D'Argo and refuses to tell him about the conversation with Macton, because it'll just piss off D'Argo. D'Argo shouts a little bit, causing Katoya to offer the opportunity to "spend some of that energy." Rygel totally volunteers: "Not him. Me." D'Argo waves the little guy off honorably, having been chosen, but Rygel explains that "these Charrid fracks" killed billions of his people, so there you go. Katoya tells him it's not "a safe place to settle grudges" and that it's not a game. Rygel replies in an incredibly Rygel way: "It's a war of wills. Where else will I get a chance at a fair fight where I have the advantage?" Heh. Katoya smiles and lets him in. D'Argo continues to bully Crichton about the Macton talk, and John finally just says that Macton said D'Argo was being threatening. Which D'Argo admits is quite true.

As Rygel and the Charrid settle and start with the movements, D'Argo continues to needle John. Finally John admits that Macton mentioned the hyper-rage blackouts, and that all Luxans get them.

Then: D'Argo storms through the house, yelling that Macton's not allowed in the house. He slams the kitchen table around a bit as Lo'Laan begs: "You're upsetting yourself over nothing!" The action grows repetitive as he raises the table and slams it down, again, and again, and again. "D'Argo, can you hear me?" He begins to scream. "D'Argo, can you hear me?" He shakes his head. He's gone. Lo'Laan watches, hands at her mouth, and begins to weep. "D'Argo..."

Now: D'Argo admits blackouts do happen, but protests that he "learned to control all that." Even John's like, "So you got the problem licked?" D'Argo explains that young Luxans are genetically violent: "Their impulses, chemistry, biology...it takes cycles to master. It's why Luxans aren't allowed to marry young." So of course D'Argo did. "She said she knew I could never hurt her. Even more than that, I gave her my solemn vow...if I did ever hurt her, I would leave immediately, no questions." John's like, "So that worked out really well for you, huh?" "Lo'Laan was always there for me." Which is kind of the rub, because, given the blackouts, that puts the entire Tronball in her court: if he can't remember whether or not he hurt her, but he's threatened to leave if he does, then it's completely in her best interest to lie.

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Rygel is gasping and groaning and drooling; in the arena, the ball's right in his face. "Excuse me, Master Jedi? Looks like Sparky's losin' more than a few brain cells in there." Katoya's like, "Indeed." John asks if there's real danger just as Rygel screams and goes into some kind of seizure. John orders Katoya to stop the game, Katoya's like, "It's Rygel's call," which I appreciate, but that's not good enough for Johnny: he turns to D'Argo all, "Okay, let's get him out." Katoya Jedi's them across the room again, and inside the arena, the Charrid's got the ball right up in Rygel's face for a good long time, causing all kinds of pain and foam, but Rygel finally spikes it right into his forehead, ending the game.

D'Argo carries Rygel into the refectory like a tiny little farting baby: "He's like ice." John advises D'Argo to keep him covered, and turns up the stairs to bitch at Katoya for not "stepping in before somebody got hurt." John's being really horribly American right now. Katoya tries, once again, to explain about *adults* and how adults make *choices* and how you *let them* because they are *adults*, but John's not hearing it, and he starts talking about leaving again. "Your training isn't over," Katoya tells him, and John's all, "Oh, yes it is," so Katoya Jedi's him down the stairs hardcore and he passes out on his stupid face. "It's just begun." Dude, I hope they fuck him up. John's being unbearable in this episode.

Macton bows to Katoya -- "Master" -- and the class sits. Scorpius and D'Argo come in last, D'Argo giving Katoya the hairy eyeball, and Scorpius explains that John's fine: "He's been moved to remedial training." D'Argo turns his stink-eye to Macton as Scorpius comments that Rygel's recovering. D'Argo: "Yeah, I wasn't thinking about that, either." Um, cool? Scorpius nods at Macton and says he's quite aware, but maybe he should be like the other *grown men in the room* and stop acting like Crichton: "Attempt to remain focused on your more immediate tasks first." Doesn't seem like he's asking a lot, does it? D'Argo growls at Scorpius and Katoya asks, once again, for him to get classy. D'Argo glares at Scorpius and stalks off; Scorpius begs him to stay focused.

Then: Lo'Laan calling D'Argo's name, trying to wake him up. "D'Argo, can you hear me?" she says, again. He sits up, and his first question is this: "Did I hurt you?" She kneels before him and shakes her head. "I know this upsets you." He reaches out to touch her face. "It upsets you too." She smiles and promises they'll get through this. "If I did hurt you, you'd tell me. Wouldn't you? You promised." She says the following: "You never hurt me, D'Argo." Which isn't an answer, at all. "But you'd tell me if I did." She smiles again, with something behind it. Something broken, and secret. And she

strokes his face. "Absolutely. I promise I'd tell you." *Now* I remember why I can't ever remember the resolution of this major character arc! It's *bullshit*, that's why. There's no way to believe, against the evidence of the episode and the Luxan facts, that he *didn't* hurt her, but the episode goes off at the last second and asks you to believe just that. In an early draft, it turned out that he *did* kill her, and you know what, frankly -- given all the resonances and fears that we're setting up now -- that would be *more* satisfying, albeit *even more racist* than what we're looking at now.

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Now: D'Argo sits in a taskchair; his current task involves stupid laser light show that hurts when he touches it, so it moves around and he has to compensate, except it's all these two-dimensional sheets that come out of a central point, so it's less a maze and more some ugly stupid effects. "Avoid pain and find a way out." Katoya tries really hard to get the concept of "anger will not serve you" across, and whatever, he keeps burning himself, because he's getting more and more angry, and keeps falling on his face in the "mindscape" and Macton's getting off, and D'Argo eventually starts to wig out: Macton stands over Lo'Laan's body in D'Argo's beautiful house. D'Argo screams and pounds his fist on the mindscape floor: "I'll kill you!" Lo'Laan stands in the kitchen. D'Argo begins to howl. Macton pulls back his fist, punching something. D'Argo screams. Lo'Laan lies on the floor, a knife sticking out of her side. D'Argo screams.

The collage effect is so of the moment, don't you find. Katoya lets him out of the task and bitches: "To exert even a *microt* of self-control over your personal impulses is the point of the exercise." Seriously. I am so on the side of the bad guys this week. Our boys are making a really fucking poor show of it. How hard is this? D'Argo slams himself out of the taskchair and flounces around and jumps to his feet, giving Macton exactly what he wants, all the way down the line, forever and ever, amen.

D'Argo prances downstairs and starts packing a bag; Katoya *once again* tries to talk him into being a fucking man instead of a pissy little boy. "[Leaving] won't provide you with the answers you seek." What answers, he asks. "What questions?" is the reply. (Katoya is also kind of a douchebag, but this is his rodeo, and it's his house, and D'Argo's being a little bitch.) "Look! I'm not playing any more of your stupid games and I do not need to be reminded of my mental limitations. If I stay here, I will kill Macton!" Get this drama: "I! Will! Kill! This! Man!" The drama takes so much out of him that he has to take a breath. Katoya's like, "Um, see? You can control your anger. You have no limitations." They stare at each other for a million years and Katoya leaves and D'Argo sits down heavily. On his tuffet.

(Here's the deal. I like this show. A lot. You may or may not know that. However, there is a poisonous thread running through it from start to finish that says this behavior is acceptable, when the truth is, it's not. How many times does John say this: "I'm just a guy!" How many times does John say that shit, without paying for it. "I'm just a guy! Guys are just like this! They occasionally play dumb! They deserve no accountability! Must have been something I said!" "*Dur dur d'Åtre un bÅ©bÅ©!*" "The rules are stupid! I hate the rules! This place -- which everyone else is managing to deal with like adults -- is so mean! I hate it! And the rules!" "Isn't it soooo sad how I *totally beat my wife?*" Even fucking Rygel is able to get with the program here, but John and D'Argo? Spend the entire episode pissing and moaning, and it's not the first time either. The entitlement of the American male. "If you don't keep lying to me about the abuse I'm

going to leave you! Because I love you! There's no power differential here at all!" It's not that I demand perfection of the characters -- I love them as they are -- but I'm afraid I *do* demand perfection of the show, and it's the show's lack of concern about this behavior that pisses me off. Rygel and Scorpius spend the entire episode begging them to get their shit together and act like adults, and they simply cannot do it. Can you imagine any other situation where Rygel is the *man* of the group? And D'Argo and John are the *pants-pissing little boys*? How is that enjoyable to watch? That, and the fact that such an ugly, manhood-limiting episode is the ultimate endpoint of the Lo'Laan storyline, which has been part of the show since the beginning. Now, it just so happens that the episode earns it, just barely, and with a whole lot of tell and not show, so this is mostly an overall issue I have, which happens to get a lot of play in this episode, which is actually kind of brilliant in a lot of ways. End of rant.)

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John wakes up alone in a metal box surrounded by grates, with glowing coals beneath him. He tries to sit up, resting a hand on the fire grate, burning his hand and sending up sparks. "Damn," he says, and looks around and out the top grill: "Hey! D'Argo? Anybody hear me? ...This must be detention, then." He hits the top grill with the heel of his hand a couple of times, calling out again.

Rygel explains to D'Argo that Macton is lying. They're sitting at the refectory table. How does he know this? "Because he's a Peacekeeper? Because he has to be. Look, he's trying to get to you. And it's working." How well? "Lo'Laan and I were happy together. He can't change that. I won't let him." Too late. You're shitting all over it. Rygel calls this Exhibit A that Macton's getting to him. "I should have killed him." Rygel reminds him that was supposed to be basically the post-S3 hiatus, right? While Pilot and Noranti and Moya and Chiana were all off getting raped, and John was nursing his own self-pity on a dying Leviathan, D'Argo was going to go kill Macton? So how come we're revisiting it now? Let's ask the screenwriters. "Part of me knew that wouldn't bring Lo'Laan back -- and another part couldn't resist letting him know that I knew exactly where he was." Ah. Well, that explains that. "Pay attention to the part that wants to kill him," says awesome Rygel. "He's given you a second chance to take your revenge." D'Argo waffles -- "I'm not sure I want to," so, you'd really just run around bitching and asking everybody else to cosign your drama, but God forbid you actually take care of business. Got it -- and Rygel's fed up: "For yotz sake! Kill him and be done with it!"

John sits in his cage -- this and Rygel are the only things I like about this episode -- whistling the obligatory *Bridge On The River Kwai* joke. Katoya looks down at John, where his hands are saying zero-four. "Are you real?" asks John. "Are you?" Katoya responds all "pain is inside the box"-style. (Katoya's a douchebag, but this is his rodeo and his house.) John bitches gibberish at him and asks to be let out; Katoya drops a key through the grill and it lands in the coals below him, and begins to melt. "You weren't quick enough. Get a key and you may come out." He stands up and walks away, and John whistles, like a bratty like kid, until he's gone -- then looks down, at the coals, and up, out of the cage. I like the cage because it says: will you or no, you will get better and you will grow. Keep screaming, but you're not going anywhere until you learn. So that John's whining and screaming stops looking like bathos and starts looking like an intervention happening.

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D'Argo and Macton enter the refectory from opposite ends. *Awkward!* D'Argo keeps the long table between them and gets dramatic: "I'll say this just once: stay away from me, stay away from my friends, and stop spreading your lies." Macton offers that he's not the one lying, and D'Argo accuses him of being full of dren. (And full of sexy!) "You've always hated me -- you'd have hated any non-Sebacean who married your sister." (Also known as "being a Sebacean." Not that you should knuckle under to racism at any point, but stop being so wide-eyed surprised by it. It's really unattractive.) Macton suggests the total lie that he might have accepted their marriage eventually, if D'Argo hadn't started beating her. Macton nods at D'Argo as he takes a long, deep breath in through the mouth and out through the nose. Out with anger, in with love! "I'm violent...when I choose to be. And right now, I choose not to kill you. But that could change." But I won't have a compelling or flattering reason, because this episode has some felled-up beliefs about what honor really means. Macton invades D'Argo's personal space a little bit. "Really? Well, if I chose to kill you, you'd never see me coming." He spills that he's there -- the whole purpose of him being there all of a sudden -- to tell him the truth: that Lo'Laan kept the truth from him. Not even Macton knows that D'Argo blackmailed her into it. This episode is retarded. "Even a stupid Luxan should be able to see the truth," Macton says, so of course D'Argo loses all composure and attacks.

I love that movie *The Cell*, because it is beautiful to look at, and because Vincent D'Onofrio was well sexy back in the day. But I also love it because it is hilarious and stupid. Any time you write about this kind of stuff, you run the risk of universalizing your own particular creepy surprise parties: a statement about one man's mind becomes a really unflattering window on the way you see the world. And I really do think that this episode has fallen into that trap. It's not the usual, with this show, where it's just that you don't want to know these things about men. The show excels in the secret So-Called Life of men, and women, and soldiers, and scientists. The problem with this episode is specific to this episode, and it's not that I don't want to know these things about men, it's that I don't want to know these things about the show, this week. It's got its shirt tucked into its boxer-briefs and it's doing a Charlie Gordon dance.

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See: Down on the table, Macton becomes Lo'Laan, begging him to stop. D'Argo vows. Macton comes back and points out that D'Argo is acting like an idiot: "Look at you. Your uncontrollable rage." Everything he says, about D'Argo anyway, is true, but we don't have to believe it, because in the final analysis D'Argo's right and he's wrong, which invalidates anything we learn during the episode. D'Argo raises a fist, just like Macton in the vision previous. "You're violent," Macton concludes, and D'Argo calms down. "You really think you'd be able to protect Lo'Laan from that? No." He's right, the whole time, and then it gets erased in the weird lazy Frankensteining of the plot points. "You must have known the truth. You've always known." Macton leaves, once again completely justified by D'Argo, forever and ever amen, and D'Argo watches him go and wonders if he's right.

Another key drops past John in his cage, and John grabs for it again, screaming in pain. He looks up, and this time it was Scorpius. John glares up, licking his burnt fingers. "You'd better have a key." Pretending they're all adults here, Scorpius

mentions that Katoya's told him John's "been experiencing some setbacks." John asks if Katoya's spilled yet about the Skreeth, and Scorpius shrugs: "That is relatively unimportant." John protests that it's important to him, but Scorpius points out the not-entirely-true fact that it was "unsuccessful." I see where he's going with it, but DK might differ in opinion about that. "That's okay, then. I don't need to be in here...Earth is safe, everything's fine." Which is entirely the point, and Scorpius finally lets him in on it: "No, Earth is not safe, and neither are you. The Scarrans know you exist. They are already coming for you, John. You cannot run away for your whole life, and I...cannot protect you from them." I'm with John on his inability to understand, still, the lengths that Scorpius would go to, to keep him safe. As a man. But as a viewer, we know. We've seen things John hasn't. "Little Cat A: I don't want you to protect me, because -- Little Cat B -- you haven't been doing such a bang-up job of that in the first place, which brings us to Little Cat C: get me the hell out of this hole!" John ends in a scream. I'm feeling that. Except for Little Cat D, which is that Scorpius is always right, even when he's wrong. He loses control precisely once, in a field of flowers. Everything else is part of the chess game.

Scorpius lies down on the grate, looking down at John. "You are undergoing a very specific training. Anti-Scarran training." John blusters that he already figured that out: "It's not the heat, it's the humidity," he says, holding up his hand with the BK grill-marks across the palm. "The heat mechanism the Scarran employs is just the beginning, John. If that heat succeeds in disabling your mind's defenses, there is no fact, no fear, no deep secret, that they will be unable to extract." John, stupidly: "I'll take my chances on my own, thank you." He's in an extremity currently, and like I said, I like this plot thread a lot, so I'm okay with John from here on out. "You misunderstand my objectives, John. Without Katoya's training, when the Scarrans find you...they will take your wormhole knowledge, and then they will kill you. I would never allow that." John calls him Scorpy-Sue: "After all we've meant to each other, you'd kill me first." Scorpius snorts, but I think he's actually a little hurt. He pulls himself further over John's head. "You have such a limited mental capacity, John! But apparently...an abundant will to prevail. Well, my advice to you is to use that will right here, right now. Katoya is the only one that can give you the tools to resist the Scarrans." He slams his hand on the grate in frustration and takes off. John resumes whistling, like he's won this round. Which is exactly what he would think, isn't it?

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Katoya and Scorpius have a little chat. "Your Crichton may not survive the training." Scorpius has no doubt whatsoever that John will be fine, and there's pride in this: "He is like me in that respect: he'll survive." Scorpius has never been under any illusions about his role on the show, and I like that about him: he's just something to resist, something to push up against. "For you to have survived so long, my teachings must have been helpful," says Katoya, and Scorpius admits they've saved his life "on countless occasions." Katoya mentions that he's tried, in the past, to get Scorpius over the coolant suit -- "And yet, you still have use of one." Which is interesting, because the coldsuit has always been primarily a symbol of his difference, his internal division, and it's interesting that now, after last week specifically, we're learning that Scorpius has places he still could go. People he still aspires to be. If Zhaan was above John, pulling him up, once she died there was Scorpius, below, pushing John

higher. Trying to get higher himself: "One can always learn more." Katoya nods slightly, and looks away. Scorpius asks for three favors. It's a fairytale, still. "Do I owe so many?" Scorpius -- as though this is a selling point -- reminds Katoya that he spared him not only from Peacekeeper captivity, but also the Aurora Chair. The latter of which Katoya's confident he could have survived. I believe him. Scorpius breathes in and doesn't speak. "Proceed," says Katoya, getting them out of this particular conversational impasse. "Firstly, intensify Crichton's training." Even if it kills him? It won't, but anyway, "without the training he'll die anyway." The second favor is to remove Macton from the equation, because he's become a distraction -- "maybe a dangerous one." Katoya protests that he's done nothing wrong, and Scorpius suggests that no matter what he says, he's going to try to kill D'Argo. Katoya shrugs and admits it could go either way, but he's not letting either thing happen on his watch. "Still, some preemptive action could be called for." And the third favor? The third favor is about love. The show jumps back and forth through so many required hoops in order to keep John and Scorpius tied together, because you can't just call it love, but love is what it is, and Scorpius gets that. They're the only unique creatures in the galaxy -- the only ones who can survive the Peacekeepers and the Sebaceans. John is neither; Scorpius is both, and in both becomes neither. They are brothers. John will never hear him say this. It's not about the things John sees him do: "Information about a species I have no knowledge of. This species has recently attacked Crichton. May I describe it for you?" *Relatively unimportant* my ass, you old softie.

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John sits cross-legged in his cage, hands on his knees, as the walls themselves turn on like a giant toaster, glowing orange. Another key drops, he burns himself again. D'Argo appears, asking if he's okay, and John -- still thinking he's in detention -- asks D'Argo to help him out of the cage. They push and pull and nothing happens. "It's gonna need at least a Qualta, or a pulse grenade," D'Argo says, and offers John a drink, pouring it through the grate and into his mouth. That's cool. I like that: the drips hit the grate below and hiss, sizzle and steam and pop. D'Argo then immediately begins to bitch about his psychodrama for a million years, and the whole time John is like, "That sucks, but I'm in a room and the room that I'm in is on fire, so can we put this on hold and help me?" But D'Argo can't even hear him, just goes on and on about maybe he hit her, maybe he didn't, and John tells him not to even go there. "I *am* there, John." Because if it's possible, then there's more that could be true. "D'Argo, many things are possible: Macton is just filling you with possibilities." I like that a lot, even as John's succinctly giving himself and D'Argo both the pass, it's still a good line. "What Lo'Laan did...that's what matters. Whatever she did, she did for you. That's what's important. And that means something." Which is where I can't follow, because of the blackmail aspect. The unexplored horror of this, which we never really approach: if she stayed, it was because *she was asking for it*. That's the only place this line goes, I'm sorry. And as strongly as I feel she should have packed a bag and tucked Jothee under her arm and written the whole thing off as a childhood mistake, and waited for D'Argo to become a man, that doesn't mean she was asking for it. It means D'Argo asked her to leverage it against loneliness, and that's uncool, and D'Argo never gets called on it. "That means that it's possible I killed the woman who loved me more than life." IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU. But thank God the show loves you

enough, and wants so strongly to avoid alienating the audience, that you can wake up at the end of the episode fresh as a daisy and say, *"It was all a dream!"*

Katoya brings D'Argo some tea or something in the refectory, and waits for him to speak. "Um," D'Argo fidgets, "probably won't be apparent from my actions, but I really do have a great deal of respect for your work here. I'm sure many warriors have been made great from your teachings, I just won't be one of them." This is a moment he can be proud of; Katoya tells him not to sell himself short. "Mental strength is, uh...well, it's not my strength. I know that." I'm just a guy! "...It's why I've come to you." Katoya asks him who the hell hasn't experienced turmoil and emotional upheaval. What makes him so fucking special. "Can you help me...find an answer?" Katoya asks him what he wants to know. "What kind of monster I really am." No kind! Everything's okay! Go back to sleep!

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Katoya and D'Argo sit in taskchairs, arms outspread. "This need not be difficult," Katoya tells him, *again*, but D'Argo's just sure it will be. They enter the mindscape. "Where do we start?" Katoya asks what he wants to see first, and walks toward him. D'Argo breathes out loudly; he's being brave. I give him this. On the floor of the arena, Lo'Laan's body lies, knife in her back. D'Argo stutters: "I don't want to see that." Katoya orders him, once again, to stay focused. "I realize this is difficult," he says, and we're back in the kitchen. "I know this upsets you," Lo'Laan says. "I know this upsets you too," D'Argo says. She promises they'll get through it: "You're upsetting yourself over nothing." D'Argo grimaces and hisses, locked in it, and begins to wig. "D'Argo? D'Argo?" She begins to back away, afraid. "Can you hear me?" Her back to the table. Katoya murmurs, "Hyper-rage is a natural function of Luxan physiology." But, D'Argo insists, "it's a function to be controlled, not flaunted -- not to be used against someone you love." She asks if he can hear her, again. Katoya asks if he did; he says he doesn't know. "But you want to know." She asks if he can hear her. D'Argo protests that he doesn't want to know. "But you came here to know," Katoya pushes. She asks again if he can hear her. He smashes her and she goes quiet. He turns to Katoya: "I hit her."

"Did I hurt you?" She shakes her head, something behind the smile. "No." But she'd tell him? Can she promise? "You never hurt me, D'Argo." Which isn't an answer. "You promised you'd tell me! Why didn't you tell me?" he asks. Even though he already knows. He reaches out to caress her face: "Don't you know how much I loved you?" She smiles sadly and nods. "Yes." Oops, too close to the truth, and we can't have that. Katoya cries out and disappears in shards of light; outside in the arena Katoya lies, unconscious, on the floor. Macton sits in his Master's chair and apologizes for the intrusion; he locks himself in.

John crouches in his sizzling cage, collapsing onto his knee. He stands, looks up, and sits again, staring at his burnt palm, and finally falls onto his face. Parallel structure, such as it is: the world will have its flesh. They're both in it. John in his cage is D'Argo in his fear and rage; D'Argo facing Macton is John facing the next level in the game: subjugation to the Scarran.

D'Argo kneels beside Lo'Laan as Macton approaches: "Ka D'Argo. Time to revisit your memories." D'Argo asks what happened to Katoya, and I admit I laughed at Macton's response: "I refocused his energies." Lo'Laan looks up at D'Argo. Macton says hello

to his sister. D'Argo hisses and attacks; Macton easily knocks him down. Macton stands in D'Argo's kitchen, over Lo'Laan's body. "Welcome home: the scene of the crime." D'Argo hisses. "The scene of your many crimes," Macton taunts him, and D'Argo gives him exactly what he wants, punching him in the face. Macton becomes Lo'Laan as D'Argo rears back to hit her again. She cries out, and he stops, to touch her hair. It's not Lo'Laan he was hitting, it was his own rage. Macton becomes Lo'Laan becomes Macton, but it's really just D'Argo, now and forever: fear and hate and self-denial. "Just like before," Macton says, and D'Argo protests that it never happened. Macton hits D'Argo, dropping him to the floor of the arena. "Go ahead, hit her," says Lo'Laan, arms akimbo, and approaches him. He pulls himself up. Her voice becomes Macton's: "Never a problem for you when she was alive." D'Argo says he never meant to, and Macton, who is Lo'Laan, who is Macton, who is D'Argo: "Aww." Lo'Laan exposes her bruised leg, her bruised arm, her wounded neck. "Never meant to do this?" D'Argo pants, giving himself the excuse of hyper-rage. Lo'Laan speaks in Macton's voice: "It was you." It was Harvey, it was Harvey's Lovely Assassin. It was Zhaan with eyes gone red. "Because you couldn't control yourself. Because you were weak!" Macton hits D'Argo heavily in the face again; what I wouldn't give for some fucking spider soup right now.

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D'Argo cries out and falls backwards against a wall hung with chains: his cell on Moya. Macton circles him, and D'Argo begs: "Not here. Not now. Not like this." Where he fought wildly, savagely, against nothing at all, for nine years. "Where else? This is where you belong. You're a wild beast. A mad dog." D'Argo hisses and tries to get up and forward, but is now chained. Macton kicks him: "You've earned these chains. And worse."

John stands in the cage as another key drops. Every key a clue, for him and for D'Argo. Every key another answer unheeded; they stay in their cages. He reaches for it again, having learned nothing, burning his fingers, reaching down through the grate and past the pain. His fingers don't fit. He yelps and pulls his hand back; another key falls. He reaches down again, and burns himself again, and almost weeps with pain and rage.

Macton slams his fist into D'Argo's face, where he stands still chained. "How does it feel to be helpless?" he shouts, punching him over and over; in the arena taskchair, D'Argo jerks. "Defenseless?" This isn't a conversation, it's a monologue: it's not a two-person game but a game for all three of them. Macton's got expiations of his own. That means there's a chance all three of them can get out of this alive. He grabs D'Argo by the waist, steadying him, and then gives him a swift kick to the mivonks. D'Argo screams and Macton says, "This is what you did to Lo'Laan," but he's not talking about D'Argo; he punches D'Argo in the gut, in the face, in the nuts; D'Argo screams. Out in the arena he jerks and gags. "This is what your rage felt like," Macton says, backhanding D'Argo's face. D'Argo sways in his chains, at Macton's mercy. "Rage that destroyed a beautiful girl," he shouts, slamming D'Argo in the face. We've left D'Argo behind and traded him for Macton.

John sits on his knees, swaying in his chains. He holds his arms outstretched, waiting for another key to drop. Waiting for somebody to save him. "Come on," he whispers. Time and patience, still. A key drops the second he looks away, falling past him into

the coals. John bends to remove the grate with his hands now, driven past pain and into clarity; his palms sizzle as he removes it, his breath in broken gasps, and he reaches into the fire. He screams as he pulls out the key, molten in his hand. This is the truth about men.

D'Argo is still, in the taskchair; D'Argo stands in his chains: "I didn't kill Lo'Laan."

Macton reverses tack: "No, you did much worse: your violence drove her to her death." Lo'Laan enters the cell with a knife in hand, which she slowly raises as D'Argo cries out. Macton nods again and again. Subject and object keep shifting, changing: we're with D'Argo again, watching this next possibility play out. She drives the knife into her own side, eyes wide open with a sigh of pain. "You beat her beyond her capacity to endure any more." She drops and D'Argo sobs. "But I got there first, I doctored the scene." Macton steps to Lo'Laan in Peacekeeper leathers and looks around. "Provided the evidence that put you in prison. To rot forever." D'Argo breaks down and weeps uncontrollably: driven almost past pain and into clarity.

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"Don't try to resist. It's my gift to you, D'Argo." It's the truest statement in the episode, but only because Macton's subjectivity is only half-real -- the episode's got D'Argo in the hot box. D'Argo, through his tears, strikes out again and again. "Your own hyper-rage, in a place where you can rot in it forever. Just you and your hyper-rage, for eternity." These actually are the choices. He's not wrong. D'Argo begins to wig, turns into rage, screaming and howling, swinging at nothing at all. In the taskchair, D'Argo begs himself to focus. Somewhere on the other side of pain, he calls back to himself, begging himself to focus. In the cell of his rage, he continues to scream, hair and tentacles a blur of rage. *Focus*. "No!" And he burns. *Focus*. Slowly his screams die into breathing. Lo'Laan rises in reverse, pulling the blade from herself, looking at him with infinite love and caring. And Macton watches. D'Argo's breathing goes quiet and calm, and he glares at Macton; with a simple jerk his chains fall away. "You're lying. Every word you've said is a lie." Macton protests, but D'Argo's on the other side of it now. "You never knew Lo'Laan. And you knew nothing about love." He hits Macton; it's a monologue. Macton drops to the floor of D'Argo's house; D'Argo stands over him, holding a key, molten in his hand. "I know what Lo'Laan went through for our love -- I wish I could have loved her half as well." Macton tries to rise, gritting out that D'Argo loved her to death. He tries to strike D'Argo but is easily deflected. D'Argo pushes him back down with that fist. Macton's bewildered: "You do not have this power!" But that's not true either. "Lo'Laan told me I do have power. Over my hyper-rage. It's more than enough to control you in here." Things go very *I know kung fu*, but I don't mind. It's the truest story in the world. Macton, speaking from his Peacekeeper self: "You cannot kill me. Not in here." D'Argo just shakes his head, finally full of grace: "I have no intention of killing you. I loved my wife...but you wouldn't know that, you didn't know Lo'Laan. I did. She could have left me for my failings -- maybe she should have -- but I know this. She would never have left her son without a mother." Ergo, we're still not at the truth. (And I think maybe that was the out clause for the blackmail stuff as well, that "maybe she should have." Maybe I've been too harsh.) "Show me your memories. Tell me why you killed Lo'Laan."

Macton gives: "Trying to save her from you." Macton stands with Lo'Laan in the kitchen, voice raised. "D'Argo will be dishonorably discharged, jailed for as long as

you need." Lo'Laan protests that he's done nothing wrong; Macton says he's done everything wrong. He's not talking about abuse; he's talking about buffalo soldiers. Of the inherent arrogance of a Luxan thinking he's a person. Peacekeepers are so gross. "You'll thank me for this, sister." He turns and starts to walk away; Lo'Laan grabs a knife and rushes Macton. In the struggle, she is stabbed, and falls to the floor. Rage. Hers, now. And Macton's to come: "It was your fault. She attacked me. My reflexes took control." Which is no more, and no less, an excuse than the hyper-rage: "My Peacekeeper training. It was over before I realized." I buy it. It's kind of a [trip to the dentist](#), but I buy it. Macton catches her and lowers her to the floor, blood puddling out. "It's not the whole truth," D'Argo pushes. "She was beaten." This is gross: "It was your fault she died: you had to pay. I had to make you pay." D'Argo's horrified; we watch as Macton -- eyes averted at first -- makes a fist, and begins to strike her body. Over and over and over. Macton shakes and cries, in the furnace; D'Argo releases him and walks away, leaving him there. On the arena floor, Macton kneels and punches air, over and over, sobbing. D'Argo breathes, and releases himself from the taskchair, and looks across at Macton, slumped in his chair, his Master lying on the floor, his head against a steel pillar. Things do not look good for Katoya.

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D'Argo flies *Lo'La* toward *Moya*; John sits in the jump seat, covering his hands in burn gel. (I originally thought it was D'Argo's DNA, because I am apparently totally grody, and I only just now figured that out.) Scorpius sits, back straight, behind them. John asks if D'Argo's okay, and for once it's true: "Fine." John asks if he wants him to drive and he says no. Rygel says that, if he was "fine," he'd have just killed Macton, instead of leaving him there. D'Argo admits that trapping Macton in "a coma with his own nightmares" was far less merciful. "I'm not that enlightened." I like this episode, I guess. It's just that in context, there are too many weird notes and "boys will be boys" for them to get off this scot-free, or this much higher on the tree. "So tell me, John. Were you able to obtain the key?" John doesn't look at Scorpius; he starts whistling the song from *River Kwai* again. Scorpius, all *In your face, bitch! I totally love you!*, clears his throat. "Incidentally, that creature that attacked you on Earth. It might interest you to know it is called a Skreeth. Apparently it can communicate telepathically over vast distances." John doesn't look up, continuing to spread the clear gel on his hands. "Katoya give you that?" That's Crichton for "thanks." Scorpius points out that "if it did map Earth's location, it may well have passed on that information." To Grayza, almost certainly -- so the Peacekeepers know where Earth is. Schemes within schemes within lies within truths. *Just because I love you doesn't mean I won't use you up like a Kleenex, bitch!* But he relents: eventually Grayza might go for Earth, but really, Grayza doesn't want Earth, she wants John. "Why do I always attract the psychos?" John snits, hilariously. Chiana, Scorpius, Crais, Grayza, and Aeryn all simultaneously go, "...HEY!"

John asks again, as D'Argo's wondering if he can plausibly deny the fact that he also kind of takes offense, if D'Argo's really okay. Heavy hangs the head, and whatnot: "Yeah, I'll be fine." And he will. But he's got things on his mind. "Things I've done. Things I can't take back." Which is all very self-dramatizing and Zhaan of him, but it occurs to me that for somebody who deals with the problems in front of his face and then goes on to the next one, there's nothing scarier than realizing sometimes the

blood *doesn't* run clear. And you go on living anyway. And that's enough of a price that I guess I love this episode after all. I love you, Ka D'Argo. There's still time.

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Previously, Scorpius explained in no uncertain terms that his role was John's protector, so that he would be able to take the proper action when "the inevitable Scarran bloodbath" begins, but he was also being creepy and spying on John and Aeryn. Later, Grayza casually mentioned to us that she and Braca were going to be meeting with the Scarrans, and Scorpius reconnected with Braca and told him to stall her -- no matter what her plans actually were, which neither of them have been able to figure out.

D'Argo's unnerved by Rygel's ongoing fast, but Rygel is off on a "self-discipline" kick after the trip to Kamp Katoya [last week](#). Of course, the truth is that he's gotten used to Noranti's cooking, and has no intention of cooking for himself. John, by way of exposition, decides that he should cook something for the girls, who are off on a shopping trip, and are due back. Rygel is wearing a funny many-colored knit collar, and John's in full leathers -- jacket and gloves -- and keeps squeezing his hand to get feeling back after last week. Scorpius isn't so sunny, noting that they're actually overdue. And Scorpius is always right, so this is not going to go well.

There's a dead Leviathan that's been fused with an asteroid, nose down, to house a commerce settlement. Aeryn thinks it's pretty unimpressive and doubts they'll find what they're looking for, as they make their way through the market stalls, surrounded by people. Sikozy tells Aeryn and Chiana to look closer: "If we want to camouflage *Moya* against long-range scans, this is the place. If you were selling outlawed mods, would you want everybody knowing about it?" She points around them: "See these humble stalls? They also sell genetic transformations, species blending...and all the appropriate documents to go with it." Noranti starts shit with a couple of vendors -- "hundred-percent natural my tullum!" -- and Sikozy keeps dragging her further in. They stop at a man in a white shirt and black vest who gets super smarmy super fast. "We want to speak to Rekka," Sikozy says, and he asks if she's sure they're on the right dead Leviathan. "I know you are his negotiator," she Sikozy, and the man notices Aeryn looking at him hard. "...And I also know that you make your deals in this pile of dren." He offers them a private table, and they follow him. He sets down some drinks and says the first round's on the house. "Care to hear our specials?" Sikozy says not unless he's running a special on sensor distorters, and he gets all wink-wink: "*Sensual consorters?*" Sikozy looks like she's gonna barf; Chiana of course giggles.

"Is that some sort of pleasure toy?" Sure looks like one. Sikoze's like, "I get that your job is to check us out, and that's great, but cut the bullshit and start taking us seriously." The dude goes all eyebrows and says, "I'd *love* to take you. *Seriously.*" Sikoze gets a headache, Chiana's loving it. "But won't your grandmother object?" he asks, indicating Noranti, who just then chokes on her drink and advises them not to drink them. "They're drugged." She looks up at the waiter with a whole lot of attitude; Aeryn lays her pulse pistol carefully on the table. Sikoze makes fun of him for using such an old trick: "Suggestibility potion?" Pshaw. The guy apologizes and admires their skills as a group. It's cool how this seemingly random grouping of Moyans actually does form a competent group: Noranti the advisor, Sikoze the street-smart one, and Aeryn the muscle. I can see how they would look pretty professional. Sikoze thanks him for the compliment and asks again to see Rekka.

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Another guy wanders up from behind the waiter, with funny Bozo hair tufts on either side of his bald head. He looks like John Leguizamo in that movie where he was a clown monster, hair-wise. "Tell me what you need. What do you want?" He acts very much in a hurry and keeps going "come on come on" with his hands. I hate twitchy arms dealers. The waiter opens a case, displaying various tech, and Sikoze says they want a sensor distorter for *Moya*, "to fool long-range scans." What do they want to look like? Sikoze wants to look like an oil freighter, because that's what she knows, because she's the only person on this entire show who ever held down a job.

(Seriously, think about it.) Chiana wants to look like a "fast pleasure yacht, with a jacuzzi." Cute. The waiter smiles at her. Aeryn rolls her eyes and asks instead for options. Rekka snaps his fingers and the waiter takes the case off the table.

"Well, I need to check your sensor modulator. Do you ladies know what that looks like?" Noranti opens her purse and takes it out, shoving it in his face, which falls slightly. "Gee, I guess we do," snorts Chiana, and Aeryn smiles. Rekka examines it: "That's partly organic. Leviathan." Aeryn congratulates him on figuring it out, and Rekka looks back at the waiter: "Distorter will only fool a warship if your movements exactly match your new identity. Is your pilot that good?" Sikoze says no, Aeryn says yes. Awww. Rekka laughs at them: "Your problem, not mine." He says that Leviathan parts are custom, so he's going to need to take *Moya's* modulator. Chiana worries that it'll leave *Moya* half blind -- not deaf, note, but *blind* -- and he says it'll only take four hours. And, the waiter adds, \$19,000. Sikoze's like, "The fuck?" The waiter offers to throw in some complimentary tokens for the bazaar.

Chiana grabs the waiter and climbs in his mouth, tongue first, as Rekka watches, and offers him some "complimentary choices" of her own. "Would that lower your price?" Would you have a weapon in your armory and leave it unused, out of squeamish "good taste"? Crackers don't matter. Rekka ups the price to \$30,000 at the offer, which makes Noranti laugh, and he turns to her: "And if it's *that*? Forty." She tut-tuts him: "Be nice." Aeryn negotiates for sixteen, and tosses the waiter a small bag: "Half up front." That's my girl. They say to meet at the transport pod in four hours -- Aeryn tries for a little slice on the timeframe, but he just says it's their rules. Rekka tosses them some tokens and they bounce. Chiana's not feeling the trust, and Sikoze agrees: "Just keep an eye on them, Chi." Chiana gets up and follows, losing them immediately. She checks out the aliens nearby, and then takes off after the dealers.

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Sikozu and Aeryn stroll, Sikozu openly admiring Aeryn's negotiations. They grin and then realize Noranti's gone. Looking around for her, Aeryn spots some Peacekeeper Commandos and shoves Sikozu and herself behind a wall. The easy way Sikozu and Aeryn interact in this episode is really neat. Sikozu doesn't even question it, just jumps behind the wall and huddles: "How many?" Four...plus Braca and Grayza. Sikozu shakes her head: "They could not have followed us here. That is impossible." She gets shifty; Aeryn wonders if they were somehow tipped off. Sikozu slowly turns to look at Aeryn. To keep the suspense going, Grayza and Braca stop walking and have a cryptic conversation about "You sure they're coming?" "Yes, keep looking." And stare around all over the place.

Grayza, Braca, and the Commandos are looking all around as Aeryn and Sikozu watch from their hiding place. Aeryn tries to comm Chiana and can't get through; Sikozu figures they were probably jammed by the PKs. "Aeryn, we need to stick together." Noranti approaches them from wherever she was. Aeryn names assets: "One weapon...and I have six of them." Sikozu: "And two outlaws, who are on the same side," if there was a tip-off. They fill Noranti in on the Commando situation and ask her to track down Chiana and warn her. Sikozu: "We've got four long arms to stay low." Ah, the old Chiana/Rygel B-plot maneuver. How I have missed it. Noranti scuttles off to find Chiana and Aeryn names their choices: "Follow Grayza, find out what she's up to..." -- Sikozu nods at this one -- "...Or we can stay out of sight." Please, like that's an option.

Chiana spots Rekka and the waiter, being all sneaky and whatnot -- at one point they hide behind a bulkhead, and when she reaches it, she comes upon a group of aliens, mostly unfriendly. Chiana comes up to a counter, where some Sephora bitches stare her down. They've both got super-long fake eyelashes and Baby Jane lipstick on and they have bad drag queen style. One is short and stout and the other one is tall with a bouffant. They totally pull a *Pretty Woman* on her, all "Very expensive," when she asks what they do. They claim not to have seen Rekka and the waiter, so she slaps down a bunch of cash: "Well, I don't mind 'expensive services,' as long as they're worth paying for." She walks around the desk toward the taller woman.

Sikozu and Aeryn watch the Peacekeepers mill around, and at the same moment, Sikozu, Aeryn, Braca, and Grayza all recognize a jet-plane sound going overhead. "Do you hear that? Unusual sonic pattern." They agree that it's a Scarran Stryker and it's quite badass. "Fastest ship in the Scarran fleet," Sikozu tells us. She watches Grayza and Braca through binoculars, the way they're a little more intense now that the Stryker's there. Aeryn watches and picks up something about "information," and they nod at each other. "What are you going to do now?" she groans to herself.

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Sephora Bitch and Chiana have a conversation about what kind of services she's looking for -- again mentioning the genetic manipulation -- but Chiana decides on a massage. She lays Chiana down and pushes a button with her long acrylics, calling up a "Nebari neural node" hologram, which Chiana tries to look at, but the woman shuts it down and starts the massage. There's a lot of moaning and groaning and massage stuff, but it's Chiana so it's kinda dirty, and Chiana's like, "Fuck yeah! Dig deeper!" so the woman presses another button and turns into a Frisco Dumptruck with

face piercings and a Shiatsu kind of anger inside. "Hey, uh...the reason why I'm...really tense is because I've been following these...two Sebacean males and I...uh, I...I think they came in here. And I...I was wondering if you could help me out." The person presses a button again, becoming a huge bald black man, who gets her in the milla nerve, which he explains paralyzes a Nebari from the neck down. "Permanently?" That depends. She's like, "I'm just a runaway Nebari, a crook like everybody else," and name-drops Rekka. The woman releases the pressure and Chiana gasps and stretches. "Frell! So you know, I forgot to tell him something, and...it would be really great if you could help me out." The woman, who could be anyone at all really, leans into her ear: "You have any idea what else we sell here?" Right: "Genetic modification. Shape changes." And whoever buys "a transformation kit" also buys "confidentiality." Chiana gets a headache. "So they probably just walked straight by me."

Grayza and Braca, with their squad, walk through the market settlement, Sikoze and Aeryn close behind. A female Scarran, in black leather and a tall horned headpiece, climbs up on a box and calls out. She's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. She's also played by Francesa Buller, who's also -- in addition to being lots of fun characters and this particular bad-ass -- Ben Browder's wife. Sikoze spots her and her squad, two nasty longneck Scarrans and two Charrids in battle armor, and they hide.

Later, Aeryn and Sikoze sit in a caf  , Aeryn with her back to the contingent. The Scarran lady continues to talk Scarran. "One Commander, one Adjutant, four warriors," which Aeryn notes is the same as Grayza's crew, which implies a meeting. Aeryn's PK-ness is like, "Why the fuck? Gross!" Sikoze's like, "Since they're here for us, it's the perfect opportunity for us to just leave," but of course my girl Sun isn't having that. "This is a perfect opportunity for us to *stay*. Otherwise we learn nothing!" Sikoze wants to argue but no words come out, because they respect each other as equals, and it's awesome. "Does this look like an official conference to you?" Sikoze agrees that it's not. Which means that Grayza's exceeding her authority, so they could use this to get her fired if they let Peacekeeper High Command know, and then she'll be off their backs. Sikoze's mostly onboard, but notes that's a whole lot of "if." "Have we been in a more fortuitous position to try than now?" Sikoze nods.

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Noranti hurries up to the fat Sephora lady. "How could I *possibly* serve you?" Heh. Noranti mentions a Nebari girl, yay high, "kind of gray," and the woman calls to Chiana's masseuse. "Another one?" Chiana comes out with her and Noranti grabs Chiana. "We have to go!" She hustles Chiana toward the pod, and Chiana's like, "Are you felled?" Noranti nods: they all are. She tells them about Grayza and Braca, the spa chicks listening in. Chiana tries to comm Aeryn -- I love that they're each other's point of contact, family, not Noranti or Sikoze, still -- and just gets static. Noranti remembers about the PKs and they rush off, the blonde women watching them go. They quickly come on some Commandos telling some vendors about how if they see a Nebari female around, they need to rat them out immediately. Why they would say that, on the off-chance that they're in a *Farscape* episode and going to run into the *Moya* crew, I do not know. It does occur to me, though, that because Chiana's Nebari, and the Nebari don't really get out much because they are the Borg, she's the most visible person in the crew. I never thought about that before. How lonely.

Chiana turns on a dime and takes Noranti back to Sephora, asking for transformation. "Full genetic modification. Good enough to pass a DNA scan." Marella's like, "But you have to pick" and whatever, and they are in a hurry, and that whole thing goes on for awhile -- Chiana asks for bigger boobs, hilariously -- and Noranti agrees with her that eyes would be good too. (Eyes, not ears, note. She hasn't used her power since I started recapping, but she's still terrified of blindness.) Finally, Chiana's like, "Seriously, whatever," and just heads back into the booth. Marella takes Chiana back and the other one smiles at Noranti. By changing their bodies, they can make the PKs blind.

A Scarran stands around the dead Leviathan's empty Pilot console, sniffing for trouble. Braca approaches, assuring him they're secure. The groups coalesce and talk smack about who's better equipped to patrol and make things safe; the Scarran returns to sniffing.

Aeryn and Sikozy find a bolthole just above the Pilot's den and fight over the binoculars, which also magnify sound. Sikozy won't hand them over just yet. Grayza and the Scarran woman greet each other, and Sikozy gasps. "That is *War Minister Ahkna*. Third in rank in the Scarran fleet." Aeryn goes, "Wow." Ahkna and Grayza intimidate each other about the nature of trust and it's all very hardcore and fun, wartime diplomacy and fronting. (Riggs and Buller had a lot of fun rehearsing these scenes, but they did them in makeup, so later on they didn't recognize each other even though they'd been working together all week. I love that.) The Scarrans all act creepy and Ahkna smiles: "You've been conditioned to resist Scarran mind-probing." Grayza nods: "We all have." Sikozy gets really annoying up above, all, "Ohhh, ooooh," but not telling Aeryn anything useful. Grayza and Ahkna accuse each other of being timewasters, and Grayza finally levels: "As I communicated, I want peace." Ahkna's like, "Everybody wishes for that at Christmas, but we're here to deal." Grayza...fully offers her the Luxan Territories! Damn, she's cold. Sikozy goes crazy and Aeryn's like, "Seriously, bitch."

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Sikozy tells Aeryn, finally, about Grayza's offer of the Luxan worlds. Aeryn's aghast, because she clearly missed Grayza Class the day they covered how little of a damn she actually gives. "She can't mean it! The Peacekeepers and the Luxans have a mutual defense pact. Grayza has to be bluffing, she can't fulfill that promise. The Luxans would go to war!" A war which Sikozy points out would be futile without the Peacekeepers backing them. Aeryn swallows. "We can't let her go through with it." Sikozy's like, "So we're just going to talk her out of it?" And Aeryn's awesome: "I have a gun."

Sikozy follows Aeryn through the Leviathan's dead fan room (they're really getting their money's worth out of the re-dressed *Moya* set, aren't they?), agog at Aeryn's new scary plan to assassinate the Commandant. Aeryn's like, "Um, she totally wants us dead, so it's cool," and Sikozy gives on that point. But what about a plan of escape? "Run." Something more detailed? "Run quickly." I love how Sikozy still doesn't quite grasp the facts about Aeryn. She grabs Aeryn's arm: "And what if we run into more opposition than we can handle?" Then Sikozy can go ahead and chat with D'Argo about why his worlds were obliterated. Sikozy tries to argue, but no words come out, and she nods. *Fuck*.

Ahkna and Grayza stand behind the Pilot's console and discuss terms. "In return for dominion over the Luxan territories, the Scarrans will relinquish all claims to the disputed sectors of the Uncharted Territories." Defined as "everywhere beyond the Kellek Nebula," which Ahkna finds hardly equitable. Grayza corrects her: "More than equitable: the Luxan worlds are wealthy. There's little of value in the Uncharted Territories." So then why, especially considering the alliance with the Luxans. Grayza says, and I'm not sure if she's lying about this, that "High Command already regrets that decision." "Luxans are warriors, not diplomats," she explains. "They are a liability to our peace efforts." Ahkna confirms that Grayza would totally just abandon the Luxan worlds, and Grayza says hell yes. "For the greater good." She points out how it's well-known that the Scarrans covet the Luxan's resources... "In the same way you've coveted the expansion room the Uncharted Territories would give you," Ahkna agrees. Each party gains advantages, and a costly war is averted. Easy as that. Ahkna doubts that the Sebacean Council would support it, but Grayza says -- surprising Ahkna, though she covers quickly -- that a majority of the Counselors already support her. "They are ready for a change of leadership." My magic boobs will reign supreme!

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This is where Ahkna begins to really deal, because Grayza's speaking her language now: "You would seize power?" Again, Grayza says, for the greater good. Not to mention how it'll help Ahkna herself. Ahkna blusters: "I need no help in that regard." Which is a lie. Grayza asks how many years it's been since Ahkna's father was deposed, and how long since her last promotion. (The sheer tonnage of backstory should tell you how central Ahkna just got to the rest of the series.) "Too long," she nods, "But then, I don't resort..." -- she stares directly at Grayza's magic boobs -- "...to the methods you utilize, to advance." Not actually an "oh, snap," because the magic boobs are the most respectable thing about Grayza to my mind, or as she puts it: "Would you have a weapon in your armory and leave it unused, out of squeamish good taste?" Word to the infinite power, and something I wish we'd said a hell of a lot earlier. There's no room in this show to be creeped out by the simple fact of womanhood, which is what you're doing when you call her a whore. A Commando interrupts -- irritating both ladies -- to let Braca know that a Nebari female's been sighted on the settlement. Braca leaves to check it out, and the women return to business.

Captain Braca mistakenly grabs a woman who's not Chiana, as things go in this trope; meanwhile, Chiana and Noranti run through the settlement, quite changed. Chiana has bright red hair, deep blue skin, and a light green suit. She looks violently beautiful -- and wait till you hear the voice! Noranti's hair is smooth, and her ears are crazy big, like pomegranate size, sticking out like Alfred E. Neuman, and her skin is smooth and Caucasian-colored, and her third eye is gone. She's wearing a shiny silver dress, and bitching to Chiana about how ugly she looks: "I look hideous. No wisdom creases. No memory lines." She feels her forehead for her eye, and cries out. Braca suddenly approaches, and Chiana tells Noranti to quit bitching and say quiet. They stand at the bar.

Braca, at attention, addresses the room: "We're looking for a female Nebari." He taps Chiana and Noranti, who ignore them, and he persists. Finally Chi turns her head,

slowly, and with a lovely, gravelly voice, suggests he try "Soorat's: Level Three. Any kind of female you could care for." She winks at him boredly; he grabs her wrist. "Hands. Off. I'm not on the market." Blue Chiana's bitchin' like Lacy LaPlante! "Besides, I don't even like men," and she turns to Noranti and they act bizarre for a sec. He grabs her and does a DNA scan, telling her to be quiet. "Oh, quiet? Quiet, my eema!" She yells at him about how his fancy uniform is worth nothing in the grand scheme, and he turns to Noranti with the scanner. "What is that? Drugs? I don't need drugs, I've got true love. You don't need drugs if you've got true love." It's low in the audio mix and just sounds kind of like crazed muttering, but it's so, so funny. She and Chiana look deeply into each other's eyes and Eskimo kiss. "You seen a Nebari female?" he asks. Every time he speaks, they tear themselves away from each other, and the longer it goes the more you can tell it's working: *Please stop crowding us, little boy.*

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Noranti answers without looking away from Chiana, with a salacious little wriggle: "I wouldn't know one if it bit me on the prang. ...Though that could be fun." He describes Chiana, and she finally cocks her head at him: "Good-looking?" Heh. He doesn't really answer, but she and Noranti giggle and moan: "We only ever notice the good-looking ones." Braca finally leaves, as they laugh. What was that Ally Sheedy movie about heroin? That was totally like that. *High Art*. Patricia Clarkson nodding off and muttering sexy crazy lesbian talk. Chiana whispers into Noranti's ear, where they're still clutched all up in each other's business: "I said I would do the talking." Noranti leans slightly back and grins: "You didn't say *all* the talking. I thought we did rather well!" Chiana bites Noranti's ear, causing her to gasp, and smiles into her face. "Come on. We've got to get back to Aeryn before the treatment wears off."

Sikozu and Aeryn catch us up, in case we forgot in all the bi-curious awesome, and the deal is that they're still talking about what they were talking about, and seem to be working it out. Grayza and Ahkna talk about all manner of land and deals, and finally Grayza's like: "Then it would seem we have an agreement." Ahkna says she wants to talk disarmament, and Grayza takes that off the table: "At present, I'll deal only with territory, not weapons." Ahkna calls this unsatisfactory, given the PK claim of "military superiority." Grayza bristles, and says it's not just claiming, and Ahkna's like, but still you won't discuss arms reduction. "We are prepared to coexist in peace, but not to make ourselves vulnerable." Ahkna says it's rumored that they are, in fact, vulnerable, and blowing hot air about their military superiority. "Perhaps the loss of our Dreadnaught was only an experiment that you haven't been able to repeat," she says -- recalling "Icarus Abides" -- "or perhaps it wasn't you who did it..." Which, if that's the case, why settle for peace? "Because you would lose a war."

"Ahkna's suspicious," Sikozu reports. "She thinks the Peacekeepers might be lying about their wormhole weapons." Aeryn fills us in -- did we know this yet? I can't remember -- how the fear of wormhole weapons is what's kept the stupid Scarrans from invading Peacekeeper space. Without the cold war, "everyone's felled." Sikozu watches as Grayza produces a writing tablet and Ahkna looks it over -- she turns to Aeryn. "Okay. It's time to intervene." She cocks her pistol and pulls it out. Sikozu catches the Peacekeeper alert on the sidelines, and Aeryn and Sikozu realize they're going to get nabbed. It's just a second -- Sikozu gives him a friendly neighborhood

tackle from the ceiling and Aeryn snaps his neck -- but it's just long enough for Ahkna and Grayza to sign the treaty, with a Scarran soldier name of Pennoch replacing Braca as witness.

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"It's too late, they've already signed." Sikoze tells Aeryn to shoot her ass anyway:

"They will never enforce a treaty if she's dead." The witness, Pennoch, mills around in front of her line of sight, and she can't get a shot. She lowers the rifle. Braca approaches and mutters that there was no Nebari found. "No matter, Captain Braca," she says, high on success and forthcoming successes, and Aeryn tries again to sight on her.

"This was an historic day," she smiles at Braca, and he congratulates them.

"Pennoch," Ahkna orders, and he zaps Braca -- Sebacean, remember -- with the Scarran heat breath, holding him still and groaning. Pennoch uses the rifle in his other hand on the Commando that was with Braca, then two more Commandos. Grayza turns and looks at Ahkna. Commercial. This could go either way. This is really cool if you think about it, because they've been little, for so long, having their adventures, and now with Ahkna replacing Grayza -- so suddenly! -- in the rotating "powerful dangerous" enemy slot, we climb up into actual politics. Not one Peacekeeper, but all of them. Not just one Scarran half-breed, but the Scarran fleet. Not reengage PK commanders, one after another, but Command itself. They've gotten big enough, engaged enough territory, worked out their shit enough, that they're equal to the task. It's nice to be rewarded.

Sikoze and Aeryn watch in amazement as Grayza, suddenly subject, threatens Ahkna. "This is an act of war!" Aeryn cocks again, and again Pennoch blocks her shot. Ahkna assures the Commandant that she won't be missed, and Grayza scoffs. "You would not dare murder me!" Ahkna says they're just going to torture her to find out about the PK wormhole capabilities. "You already know that you'll learn nothing," Grayza hisses, and Ahkna: "No, not here. But our facilities are so much better on Katratzi." (Heard that word before? You'll wish you hadn't. A thousand times.) Aeryn continues to try and get a clear shot; Pennoch growls and yanks Grayza away by the shoulder. The contingent leaves.

Aeryn lowers her rifle: "They'll interrogate her now." Sikoze wonders what will happen when they find out the truth, and Aeryn assures her they won't. "We can't let them." The whole show clicks now, as the Scarrans stop being theoretical and start being real. It's not so much that they have to side with the Peacekeepers against a greater threat as it is that they're now in a battle with more sides than the Tronball. There's the *Moya* family, who are on their own. There's the Peacekeepers, who are not necessarily acting in Sebacean best interest, and Grayza (don't count her out entirely) who's not necessarily acting in Sebacean best interest either. There's the Scarrans, specifically Ahkna. And there's Sikoze, and Scorpius, who have a lot of tasks on their To-Do Lists that don't necessarily coincide with any of the above. And at the middle: John Crichton. When he brings peace, it won't be through science and it won't be through violence. But we're not there yet, because he hasn't lost everything yet, on this new level of the game.

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Aeryn and Sikozy hide from the Scarrans and their prisoners, and run into Chiana and Noranti, who approach her. Chiana takes in the sight of Grayza bound and whispers, "Frell." After the detachment passes, Aeryn steps out and gestures to Sikozy: "Follow them," she mouths, and Sikozy takes off. "What the frell happened to you two?" she asks, turning to Chiana. They explain it's temporary, and admit they haven't grabbed the modulator yet. (The "upgrades" to *Moya* follow a rigorous scheme as well, as we move to each successive level of the political game: [meet your first PK Tech](#) and see the PKs for what they are and gain defense; [meet God and get a steward](#); meet the Scarrans and realize Grayza isn't the problem, you get a cloak that turns you into anything. *Moya* grows too.) Aeryn tells Chiana not to worry about the Scarrans and that whole mess, just get the modulator and be at the pod. She takes off, leaving Aeryn and Noranti to list assets again. "Right, we're low on weapons." Noranti shrugs: "I didn't bring any guns. I don't have any guns." Aeryn asks her what kind of Granny Blow she can make. "Fyang powder. It's a wonderful substance, it'll put anyone to sleep instantly." *Good*, says Aeryn. "Except I don't have any." *Not good*. Noranti digs through a pouch: "However, this looks like mayla spores. They're very powerful." Aeryn asks if it'll work on Scarrans and Charrids; Noranti doesn't know. War Minister Ahkna stands near a large open sarcophagus of science, inside which Grayza's locked. Braca's got his hands tied overhead around a nearby pipe; Pennoch looks on. Grayza assures Ahkna that "this blunder" will cost her dearly, and Ahkna (kind of correctly, I think) says really the blunder was Grayza's. Braca shouts how she's just started a war she can't win, that the PK wormhole technology will decimate your planet. Which is only a safe bet for Ahkna if he's wrong, but if she knew that she wouldn't be doing this, so I don't know what she's up to exactly -- oh wait, yes I do. It has to do with the device Grayza's standing in. Gotcha. Cake and eat it too. Pennoch heat-breaths Braca some more and snots, "You terrify me." Braca sags in his bonds, and Pennoch asks if he's really necessary: "When he no longer has a use, may I be the one to dispose of him?" She says he can, and then exposit that they're going to get back in their Stryker and rendezvous with her Dreadnaught.

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Aeryn tries to rush Noranti with the spores, and Noranti spits into her hand. "...Takes time. And spit." Aeryn frets, "We never have enough time," and Noranti's awesome: "I don't have enough spit, but I'm doing what I can." So hush up! Sikozy runs up and tells them that the prisoners have been taken to the dead bay nine, and haven't yet powered up the Stryker. Aeryn figures this means they have enough time, but Sikozy shakes her head: two Charrids came out of the bay and headed this way. "You heard Ahkna's orders," says one of the Charrids, still in their armor. "If you see a Peacekeeper Commando, shoot to kill." Wow. See how awesome Ahkna is? They hide and then Noranti pops up and approaches them, worrying Sikozy. "I know who you're looking for, you don't have to harm me," she says, as Aeryn takes aim at them. Noranti promises to lead them to the PKs, then sneezes some Granny Blow into the face of the closer Charrid, who sneezes. Noranti patters for a few seconds, then points behind him suddenly: "Right now, there's one behind you. Right there, a Peacekeeper." The Charrids blow hell out of each other and Noranti hauls as back to Aeryn and Sikozy. Noranti: "Whoa. I must remember to get more mayla spores." Aeryn thanks her sweetly and tells her she did a great job, and Sikozy grabs one of

the guns off a smoking Charrid. Aeryn looks at the Charrids and smiles up at Sikoze: "I know it's not your color, but..." And Sikoze smiles back. I wish they had their own spin-off.

A Charrid guards Grayza and Braca in the bay, as the Charrid uniforms roughly push Noranti inside, crying out for help. I love it when Noranti pretends to be scared, it's always so ridiculous and cute. "I don't even *know* any Peacekeepers! You've got the wrong young female!" They toss her to the floor and she asks the Charrid inside for help. He looks down, and the Aeryn Charrid calls out to him: "Hey, gorgeous!" She shoots him, as does Sikoze; Braca's mind is completely blown. The Charrid falls on top of Noranti, who's like, "Hello!" Sikoze counts out the leftover bad guys: "One Charrid, two Scarrans..." Interesting what she leaves out, and Aeryn fills in: "And two Peacekeepers." She doesn't salute with her body, but there's a ironic tilt in her voice as she nods at Grayza: "*Commandant*." Ha!

Chiana, still deep blue and emerald, hurries aboard *Moya's* transport pod and sits down, closing the door behind her. She futzes around with the control console as Rekka's waiter friend slides into Command, silently, and then grabs her. Rekka steps up onto the platform and knocks her out.

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Aeryn and Sikoze remove their Charrid armor; Grayza congratulates (sincerely) Aeryn on her "exceptional work." Aeryn sarcastically congratulates her on the Luxan treaty. "For that alone, I shall kill you both." She cocks her rifle at Braca's head; Grayza says smoothly that if she's alive, she can still repudiate the treaty. "But you proposed it, and you signed it," Aeryn says, and Grayza agrees that if Ahkna hadn't screwed her, she'd have stood by it. "We could have lived in peace." I do see where Grayza's coming from, a lot of the time. If you could let Talikaa die, say, because she wasn't in the family, that means your world extends to the limits of the family. The politics of location. Grayza's responsibility extends to the Sebacean people and no further, which would be honorable and nothing else if it weren't for the alliance with the Luxans. I don't agree, but I can see where she's coming from. Plus, as she points out, there's totally a PK Command Carrier orbiting the dead Leviathan, which the pod can't really evade.

An armed Charrid walks past the bay doors and Aeryn nods to herself. "If I'm not back at the pod in half an arn, you go without me," she tells Sikoze. She ducks back out and Sikoze orders the PKs to move. Outside, Aeryn turns the leftover Charrid and Scarrans into greasy spots.

Sikoze motions her rifle at Grayza and Braca, cuffed together, into the cafÃ©. Noranti appears saying they should go to the pod, and Sikoze says they're going to wait for Aeryn. "Aeryn is dead by now," Grayza says, and Sikoze points the rifle at her. "I said keep moving!" Braca turns around, walking backwards, double-teaming Sikoze with their smooth prisoner talk. She is so not the girl for this. "Killing Charrids is one thing, but two Scarrans?" Sikoze yells at them to shut up; they've already won this round. "It was a great sacrifice on her part," Grayza sighs, awesomely. Sikoze lets them draw her in, and begins to argue with them. Noranti offers to take the PKs to the pod, and Sikoze can go help Aeryn, but Sikoze -- for about the hundredth time in this episode; the writer probably has OCD -- lists how many guns, which is just one, so that's a no-go, and Grayza says the Scarrans are probably just around the corner, and

meanwhile Braca -- they really are a hell of a team, aren't they? -- offers some suggestions, but Sikoze's wiggling, and Grayza applies some pressure: "If we stay we die. It would be a great pity if Aeryn's death were for nothing..." Sikoze steps just that inch closer, screaming that Aeryn's not dead, and Braca and Grayza go to work on her and Noranti, knocking them down and grabbing the rifle. That was awesome! Echoing Ahkna in the previous scene, Grayza informs us awkwardly of their agenda: "Prime the Marauder; we must leave immediately." A little more editing on this episode, that's the only drawback this week. Lots of repetition and weird expository moments. The actors couldn't even have helped with that, because it's different setups and different members of the cast doing it every time, so it's little things accreting that nobody would have noticed, but in the final edit, it's kind of an unholy mess. Great episode, but on that note only, it's super-suck and feels rushed.

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Chiana wakes and asks Rekka why she's tied up. He says they don't like trespassers, and it only takes a second for her to figure it out: "Oh. Kay. I got transformed." He circles around her, trying to be scary, and she pivots around and around, trying to convince him she's herself. He's not listening, just laughing at her: "Seriously, now. We do have a strict policy. Nobody steals our client's ships."

Sikoze comes to on the floor of the caf  , and runs to Noranti, waking her. She lifts the old woman slowly and they regroup.

Chiana swears she's been transformed: "*You gave me the frelling tokens!*" The waiter bends toward her and beckons her close; she licks his lip with her tongue and he looks at Rekka. "Are you sure?" He nods. "They didn't transform her tongue." Heh. Rekka backflips into customer service: "In that case, here's your modulator! Sensor distorter installed. You do still want this?" The waiter takes it and explains she just plugs it into Pilot's "neela trunk," and he'll feel the options come up. He reaches into her pocket for the other half of the cash and she whirls on him: "Do I get a discount for being knocked out?" Waiter guy's like, "We should charge you more for guarding your pod!" Heh. She growls at him and lunges, but Sikoze enters asking what the hell; waiter guy hands her the modulator and Rekka thanks her for her patronage, and they leave. Sikoze asks Chiana if she's okay, and Noranti and Sikoze untie her. Sikoze starts to prepare the pod and Noranti asks if they shouldn't wait for Aeryn; Sikoze says they'll give her the half hour. Chiana asks all the right questions, about Aeryn and the Scarrans and whatnot, but they won't answer her. Sikoze finally admits that after a half-hour, Aeryn really will be dead. Chiana stares out into the bay, shivering. Twenty-minute lacuna!

Sikoze paces the pod, arms across her chest; Chiana sits in the pilot seat and fidgets. Sikoze says it's almost time and Chiana gets scared: "No. We need to find Aeryn."

Sikoze, who's worried too, Sikoze's at her. "For once in your life, exercise some self-control." Chiana says she is, proof being that she hasn't shot Sikoze in the head. Excessive! Noranti tells them both to stop it, and Aeryn comes flying into the pod and into a seat. "Are you all right?" Chiana asks her, and she's breathing hard as she says she is. Sikoze blasts off and they head back to *Moya*.

Pilot informs the worried Ka D'Argo that the transport pod is returning -- "at high speed." Scorpius asks if they've signaled distress, and they have not; John asks if *Moya's* signaled Rygel's distress -- his hunger -- and Pilot doesn't get it: "Inadvisable,

as that would confirm our position to the Scarran warship pursuing them." *Bwuh?! Everybody jumps and freaks; D'Argo orders starburst as soon as they get onboard -- which Pilot was already doing -- and they starburst away with the pod inside.*

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D'Argo sniffs loudly at Chiana, who's still deep blue; she asks if it's really necessary, and he's just like, "It's so crazy! How you smell!" She pulls out a syringe and -- still in the voice -- tells him the genetic changes of course change her scent. "Is it permanent?" She stops with the syringe: "Do you want it to be?" And he leans in close, smiling sweetly: "I prefer the elegant gray." Elsewhere, Rygel pesters Noranti to cook for him. "I may never cook again," she teases, and continues down the corridor, Rygel whining after. This is all so sweet! Where's the Downer Tag?!

Oh, right. John and Aeryn walk down the corridor, John comforting Aeryn about missing her shot at Grayza, and the escape. "We had her! We let her go!" John says he'll take the trade, considering that Aeryn's there and Grayza's not. (Can you imagine Grayza on *Moya*? I mean, in the Scorpius way, not like she was before. That's so weird to picture.) "She tried to strike a deal, Ahkna wouldn't go for it. The Scarrans must be dead set on war." John peers down a corridor and catches up with her: "That's Scorpy's line. Let someone else lose sleep over it tonight." Aeryn: "What should we lose sleep over?" He smiles and cautions her: "Careful." She leans in to kiss him, silently, but they are jolted together (drink!) as *Moya* suddenly drops out of starburst.

Pilot informs everybody that despite the starburst, the Scarran warship is still in pursuit, "at the extreme edge of *Moya*'s senses." John and Aeryn join D'Argo and Sikoze on Command; John figures they've brought a homing beacon onboard. Pilot doesn't detect any signals, so D'Argo figures John's right. Chiana sweeps the pod for a beacon and comes up with nothing. Noranti is with Scorpius in the Neural Cluster, where they're testing the sensor distorter. It's clean too. "All right, it's not the hardware -- try the software," John says. Pilot adjusts his sensors. D'Argo: "Anything from that planet. Anything." Sikoze looks at John; John looks at Sikoze. Aeryn speaks softly, facing away: "You know, it could be her. We were separated." Aeryn turns to stare at her as well. "I did not betray you," she says, insulted, as a DRD scans her. Chiana stares at the DRD in the pod, asking if perhaps it wants her to undress. "The DRDs detect nothing from either Sikoze, Chiana or Noranti," says Pilot. "...Nothing from Aeryn, either." Scorpius says the "unavoidable next step" is a tier-by-tier search, which Pilot informs them is of course not a possibility. "The Scarran warship is now on the edge of *Moya*'s sense horizon..." which I'm guessing is a lot smaller than usual, since they haven't put back her sense modulator yet. The Scarran warship, lights all over glowing dark red, moves slowly toward them in space as everybody looks at everybody else.

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"Have they found us *again*? Frell me!" yells the exasperated Chiana -- Rygel notes that's actually possible, and D'Argo asks if *Moya* can starburst again yet. Of course not. Sikoze tells the Cluster team to activate the sensor distorter, since this is why they went in the first place, but Scorpius tells them it's not ready yet. Pilot gives them about three minutes until the warship identifies them. Rygel: "I hate to say it, but..." D'Argo tells him not to, then, but Noranti pauses: "No one is chasing *Moya* and Pilot --

it might be better just to leave them." John quietly asks Aeryn if they should bail, and she says it's safer for *Moya*, but he shakes his head. "What about the..." He cradles his arms; Aeryn stares at him. He cocks his head, frustrated. "...Baby. What about the baby?" She shakes her head, confused. "What?"

John stares at her, trying to read her eyes, trying to stop this from happening. She just looks back at him, confused, trying to get a read on what he's saying. Finally John whispers. "Where's the beacon, Aeryn?" She looks at him, confused and starting to worry: "We don't know?" He backs away from her, voice getting louder. "Where's the beacon, Aeryn?" Everybody gasps when he pulls his pistol on her. She just repeats: "We don't know." Sikozu starts toward him, asking what the hell is going on, and he points the pistol at her. "Wait!" D'Argo screams. John trains the pistol back on terrified Aeryn. There's so much sadness and fear in his eyes, but that's for later. Certainty for now. "Where's the beacon?" Chiana comms from the pod, asking what he's doing, but he ignores them all, shaking his head. "Where's the beacon? It's a simple question: where's the beacon?" She tells him again that they don't know. Noranti comms in to ask what he's doing, but Scorpius just listens, carefully.

"Where's the beacon? Where's the baby?" She looks at him, confused, mouthing silently that she doesn't understand his game. There's the shadow of a confused smile on her face, even now. She shakes her head. "Where's the baby? Where's the beacon? Beacon, baby. Beacon, baby..." Aeryn looks over at Sikozu, who's watching John, asking themselves if he's going down again. "Whose beacon? Whose baby?" Aeryn glances towards the others, afraid, and turns back to John. He circles her, heart breaking. "Who's the beacon? Who's the baby? Whose baby is it? Who's the daddy, Aeryn? Aeryn, who's the daddy?" Again, pain in her eyes, she mouths to him: *I don't know*. Black plays this brilliantly, because it's her reaction -- even though you know the imperfection is Aeryn's right now -- that makes this so heartbreaking. It lends so much shading and confusion to what follows. She's saying their unbreakable bond is breaking, and he's the one breaking it, because the language that they speak, she's silently telling him, just stopped making sense.

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"D'Argo, tell her who the daddy is." D'Argo, sadly, answers that they don't know. We don't know who the daddy is (come on, we totally do!). He nods, like he just realized John is going crazier than they thought. And the Dreadnaught on their six. "Right, we don't know...who," John gulps. It hurts. How many times, I said drink every time Aeryn's not Aeryn, and what it means. No matter how romantic the love scenes, the silence and the ironic declaration of backwards love, no matter how happy they finally are: we don't know what she did during the dark time. And we don't know who the daddy is. What hurts is not that Aeryn's gone, suddenly -- that's just another quest -- what hurts is that it's so plausible, after all that's happened. Sikozu stops watching John and stares at Aeryn now, too.

"Say 'baby,' Aeryn," he pleads. "Aeryn, say 'baby.'" His gun in her face, still confused and full of so much love. So much concern for him, for what he's going through. "Say 'baby.'" He's close to crying. Her mouth moves. "Spell it." Aeryn stares at Sikozu, her partner and friend this week, and back to John. He begins to sing.

"A-B-C-D-E-F-G...H. I. J." Aeryn begins to sob, looking back at him. "Where's Aeryn? Aeryn?" Even weeping, her hand travels down to her pistol, cocking it in its holster. He

stares into her eyes; she starts to draw. He shoots her in the face, point-blank. Now, he's ready for politics.

Smoke rises from her hissing head; D'Argo jumps forward, then just stares. One side of Aeryn's lovely face is bubbling plastic and fused wires. Her eye, the remaining eye, flutters and closes. Sikozu says, softly: "Bioloid." D'Argo asks, "What's a bioloid?" and Sikozu says, pointing: "[That](#)." Sikozu knows a lot of shit about a lot of shit, have you noticed? Aeryn's head throws sparks, quakes, melts down her side. As D'Argo comes near, the bioloid falls backwards like a post, thudding into the ground.

Pilot comms them half a minute -- half a minute for so much pain -- until the warship comes close enough to identify them. Scorpius gasps into comms that he's temporarily patched the sensor distorter in, and Pilot nods, feeling his options. Sikozu: "A Scarran ore freighter, and mimic its movements." Pilot engages the order.

D'Argo watches John staring down at the bioloid, its face still bubbling and popping.

Sikozu opens the Scarran hail, and D'Argo orders her to answer it, which she does, sounding only slightly uncomprehending. The warship breaks off and wanders away.

Sikozu and D'Argo sigh with relief; John's lost to them now. "What did you say to them?" She tells him that she said they noticed a Leviathan starbursting in, and they were afraid it was going to board them, so she thanked them for scaring it away.

D'Argo grunts and turns away; Sikozu leans on the console and rests her eyes.

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John kneels beside her, rocks back on his heels. It's not enough to say "I love you," or "Honesty from here on out." The lies will get you. Even if you think you're over it, you're not. There's some part of you that still sees her as an imposter. Sikozu digs through her guts and hands Chiana the homing device from Aeryn's brain. "That device confining Grayza was not meant to transport her," she realizes, and Scorpius comms in from the Cluster. "No, it replicates living flesh. We've known about it for some time, but never encountered the result." Chiana peers down into Aeryn's head. "Effective technique," D'Argo notes. "No rescue attempt, while they're at their leisure to torture Grayza." "Then why did they take Aeryn?" asks Noranti, while Sikozu fritzes out in the background, all of a sudden feeling very close to Aeryn indeed -- "*I got away, she got caught*." Noranti wonders if maybe they thought the Aeryn would bring back Grayza. "Or Crichton," Scorpius suggests. D'Argo murmurs Sikozu's name, and she looks up at him, nods, and leaves him alone with John.

"You okay?" John is not. "You know...it's not Aeryn." John stares. "It was never Aeryn."

D'Argo lays it out. "We're not gonna give up on her, John. Sikozu said the Scarrans are taking Grayza to a place called Katratzi. Maybe that's where Aeryn is now." John stares past the bioloid into the sky: "She could be anywhere out there." D'Argo promises they're not letting her go, and gives him a smile of support. John, alone, turns back toward the body.

<http://www.televisionwithoutpity.com/show/farscape/a-constellation-of-doubt...>

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"Officer Aeryn Sun. General Ka D'Argo. Sikozu Svala Shanti Sugaysi Shanu. Dominar Rygel XVI. Chiana. Utu Noranti Pralatong. The Pilot. These are the first extraterrestrials known to have visited this planet." And with that, we're welcomed to

Alien Visitation, R. Wilson Monroe's latest muckraking [Bashir](#)-esque special, in which he will detail for us stupid Earthlings the recent visit of eight (nine) alien visitors, and their ties to the IASA space program. "It has now been several months since they left with Commander John Crichton aboard their ship, *Moya*...and besides their names, what else do we really know about them? Precious little, except the carefully orchestrated appearances allowed by our government. Good Evening." We pull out: John's watching the special on the TV Aeryn bought him for Christmas. *"And tonight, we will pierce the veil of secrecy, showing you these aliens as no one has witnessed them before."* As though we're ready for that; as though the truths are literal. Rygel asks John how many times he's going to watch the awful thing. "Until I figure it out." Rygel bitches that he told Pilot to keep the transmission a secret from John. John, lost in thought, muses how easily Earth avoided his -- and the crew's -- pleas for understanding and interspecies trust. One of the cool things about this episode -- or lazy, depending -- is how it imputes so much that we didn't see in [Terra Firma](#). We saw like two scenes of John fighting The Man and trying to get everybody to work together. Which to my mind was the best thing to do: his conversations with Holt at IASA were symbolic of the brick wall they were hitting. We didn't get to see them hoping, all that much, but now we can remember that they did. And it's part of the story, and we knew it at the time. But so much of it becomes real with this episode, looking back through their disappointment.

"Well, what do you expect?" asks Rygel, always at home with cynicism. John shakes his head. "It's not what you expect, it's what you hope for." A Catholic bishop appears on screen, discussing this and that. Rygel further explains some things about Earth: "It's a backward planet full of superstitious, xenophobic morons. Nothing makes sense if they didn't think of it first and, even then, it's simplistic drivel." John wanders around the room and Rygel pissily apologizes: "How rude! Are you from there?" The Dominar is forthwith expelled from the room by force, as Rygel grunts and waves his arms and whines. "My quarters. My life. My TV." He hurls a bowl of popcorn in Rygel's face as Rygel blusters.

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And grumbles: "This won't bring her back, you know." There's concern in Rygel's voice, for all that, even as he's spitting out the popcorn. John's never rejected him like this, not ever. One of the amazing things about this episode is how seamlessly and subtly it weaves Rygel's love for John, and for Aeryn, into his unique perspective on their relationship. He really does believe in the Love That Oh My God, and you rarely get to see it. Just think about the first ten minutes of *Peacekeeper Wars* in that context, for a second: he's a bigger part of them than anyone else, including Stark and D'Argo, by the end. Which is as it should be: as their love passes the test of vulgarity, it is transcended. *Through* the body to what lies beyond, not below and not around and not skipping a step: that's the story of love. They had to have a lot of sex before Rygel could possibly administrate the physical expression of that love; they had to let their own Rygels into the conversation. Same as with all Zhaan's storied sexual prowess, she mostly fucked: the sun, probably Stark who's equivalent, and that dude she killed. And her own arrogance, of course. Am I leaving anybody out? That purple guy, yeah, but that was like some Sikoze/Scorpius stuff, and they didn't actually do it.

John pours himself a drink and comms: "Sikozu Shanu." Her answer, from command, is a simple "No." Upon which she elaborates -- in response to his "Nothin'?" -- that "nothing" is a "reasonable interpretation" of the word "No." John knows, in his heart, that the word for Aeryn is *Katrasi*. That her abductors, the Scarrans who so cruelly stuck him with yet another fake Aeryn, have taken her there. Onscreen, we see Aeryn in PK garb, next to Cousin Bobby, being photographed in front of a lit Christmas tree. "As stupid as you must think them," Sikozu says with much ire, "the Scarrans have managed to build one of the most extensive empires in the galaxy. In part -- and I shall repeat this because it does not seem to sink in -- by not *advertising the location of their secret bases*." I always talk about how creepy she is, but I'm always on her side. Even with the hair later, she's really the most admirable among them in many ways.

She's a political operative, a terrorist and spy in an actual cause. None among them -- John, Rygel, even Scorpius -- can claim that. She's got to be so very many women at once, and that's exhausting; even more exhausting to find herself caring about these freaks all around her. And she does care: this is the voice of lost hope. She was just beginning to crack Aeryn, just beginning to make a friend and equal aboard the vessel. They didn't just take Aeryn away from John, and that knowledge, in this episode, is expressed in the quietest, saddest ways. "Are you asking the right people? Are you asking in Scarran?" She calls him an unkind word, because of course she is. We've had so many quasi-Sebaceans onboard through the years -- Aeryn, Crais, Scorpy -- and she's such a weirdo that it's hard to remember she's the Scarran version of them in a lot of ways. And the more you know about her, the longer her story gets, unfolding around itself, the more you see she really is just like them. She gets no credit at all, because her story is so veiled in secrecy that by the time you know the whole thing, the stakes are too high to go back and remember all the times you could have been kind. "I know what that means, and I love you too," John snits. She says -- by way of grudging apology -- that he earned the epithet: "Bother me one more time and you can come down here and do this for yourself." John sits again and turns the TV up; Sikozu continues to try.

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"When we come back, we will meet Officer Aeryn Sun, rumored within many circles to be John Crichton's lover." Video footage of Aeryn; John continues to drink. "This alien, who looks remarkably human, will reveal a side of herself that you may find disturbing." The camera zooms in tightly on Aeryn's face as she admits that she looks like a human, which...something. "Please stay with us as *Alien Visitation* continues." Commercial, and it does. R. Wilson Monroe sits on a stage with Aeryn Sun, wearing black, her hair down and straight, her manner perturbed. "Earth is under no threat from the Peacekeepers," she grits. Monroe protests. "Look. If you were to make a pact with an enemy...then perhaps." She needed to watch more TV. John's face is reflected on the screen, behind Aeryn. "So the possibility exists that your people one day would attack?" She sighs and laughs -- Monroe's not doing his best to make us look smart. Or well-intentioned. "Why are you so determined to twist this into something it's not?" Because, he says, she's an admitted soldier in an alien army. "You look human, indistinguishable to the naked eye." How could any of us know there aren't thousands of Peacekeepers roaming the planet, preparing for destruction?

Homeland Security: when you start looking at people and pretending they're not people, everything looks like the enemy. Anybody could be anything. She says John must have explained the PK situation and he shakes his head: "We need to hear it from you." *Hear what? That Earth is sacrosanct? That your perfect isolation can somehow be restored? Is that it?* When the veil breaks you can't fault them for fearing; she's wrong about that. The correct response to a breach is terror and a quick response. What's on the tip of tongue is that hatred is not the correct response, but she doesn't know about that yet. "Look...you're not a threat. Technologically speaking, you're not even a potential *ally*, so..." -- she sighs, fucking this up just so bad by being the one thing you can't be: honest -- "if someone wanted to enslave you, if they wanted to destroy you, could it be done? Quite simply, yes." She shrugs and smiles, and the image freezes.

"The reason you have not seen that interview before is because it was held back, after requests from both our own government and the United Nations Secretary-General. Tonight, we have our first look at over one hundred and twenty hours of previously unseen videotape on the aliens. Tonight, you have the chance to see portions of this material, along with comments from various experts and leaders." But first, he introduces Cousin Bobby, who comes onstage nervous and smiling. Bobby explains about John being his uncle, and how he stayed with the aliens and John and his mom in Florida for "a couple of weeks." He insists that the aliens are "normal, just like you and me," but of course Monroe's not feeling that. "Some more than others," Bobby admits. "Did you ever feel threatened?" No. "Did you ever get a sense that there was a conspiracy between them?" No way. In the asking of the question there's the other answer to the question, and that is journalism. "So why did you and your family wait so long to make these tapes public?" Because everybody wiggled out, and "all these weird accusations" were surfacing, and Olivia and her son decided to let the tapes out: "...That it was best to help everyone not be afraid."

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D'Argo on video, on the balcony of Chez Alien: "I've seen lots of your movies, and in every film, the aliens are always evil...and Earth always is victorious." Bobby asks if he's saying we have to learn that there are good aliens; he pans in on D'Argo's reply: "No, I mean you have to learn you won't always win." This is D'Argo's truth. It's the only truth he knows: you can be overtaken. Dr. Garrett Hamilton, anthropologist from the University of Michigan, gets all oxygenated: "This is a watershed moment in human history, the equivalent of a huge meteor smashing Earth during dinosaur times. Will we bend under the sudden weight of it? Or respond and flourish?" He's one of the good ones. This show *Alien Visitation* is some expertly edited (though let's not talk about the fishy perfection and professionalism of Bobby's footage; that's nitpickery and not allowed in this particular dojo because what's the point) propaganda. It just gets worse and worse.

Aeryn cocks an eyebrow at Bobby at the counter in the kitchen, wearing a long-sleeved dress: "You can't even fully accept us, and we're the *nice* aliens...what about some of the next ones that come down through the wormhole?" She picks up a sandwich, takes a bite out of it. Dr. Jason Fletcher, the president of the International Society of Sociology: "My biggest fear, exacerbated in part by these tapes, is that the

fabric of our society may come under an assault it is not yet prepared to withstand."
...Less hopeful, but still understandable.

The camera zooms in on Sikozu, sitting in the den. "The political complications that may arise from a simple wormhole floating in your atmosphere will devastate a planet that is still in the throes of intraspecies chaos." She speaks matter-of-factly, and she should know; the camera pans back and back as she goes back to her reading, surrounded by information. Dr. Edith Anderson, Psychologist -- and author of *What Makes Us Tick: A Study Of Evil* -- has a serious case of Mean Old Lady face. "I'm particularly concerned with the effects of another alien visitation on society in general. Since they've left, there's been a seven-hundred-percent increase in panic and anxiety attacks." Just the kind of medical claim that...cannot be verified or tested. I smell another bestseller! Rygel sits at a table, adorably covered in pumpkin pie and whipped cream: "If Earth is remembered at all, it will most likely be for the quality of its manual labor." Heh. But also, yikes! Stop him talking!

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Monroe segues to D'Argo -- in his words, the "one alien visitor...who never failed to elicit extreme curiosity" among network staffers. He is good TV, I will give him that. Bobby and D'Argo sit inside Lo'La, which Bobby pronounces "so cool." D'Argo, who is apparently in no mood, gives a grave answers, even as Bobby's whirling around and shooting her from every angle. "It's a weapon. It kills people." Like monsters and stuff? D'Argo chuckles dryly. "Yes, sometimes. But sometimes just, uh...kills those who are in the wrong place at the wrong time." Yeeowch. Get him off the screen! Bobby says D'Argo promised to give him a demo, and he puts Bobby in front of the telemetry controls: "It's a recording captured through my targeting array." Bobby takes one giant step back in his enthusiasm as he watches the video. "Whoa! It just...that...it just...*disappeared*." D'Argo explains it's a recording of the rogue Leviathan that attacked them (In "Dog With Two Bones"), and how Lo'La was called upon to destroy her. Now might be a good time for a gut check: how far, just hypothetically speaking, would you go to save the one you loved? How far could mourning push you? Rage? Terror? Love? How rogue do you go when your heart destroys the world? Just a question; I'm just curious. No reason. "Could you...I mean, could we stop you if you tried to attack us?" D'Argo answers honestly, as they all seem hell-bent on doing: "With your current defenses? No." It's the message, the "look upward," that's the problem here; he just looks too weird to let it stop there.

Major General Stephen Walcott, USMC, Ret.: "The most frightening aspect of this Pandora's box we've opened is, he may be right. From what I've heard, his ship has our best and brightest utterly perplexed." Old Lady Edith chimes the fuck in: "By indicating that our current defenses could not contain him, General D'Argo is performing an act of psychological terror." We judge others by our own standards, always. If anything, that's a good reason to be inclusive: it's a much better color on you. John fast-forwards; D'Argo approaches and watches with him as Video D'Argo tells Bobby they'll be leaving soon. "There are some people here, some very powerful people, who don't appreciate what we're doing." Not kicking the Moyans out, exactly, but "making it very difficult for us to continue." John fast-forwards: "It might be a bit dramatic for one Luxan, but, uh, I can do enough damage to your world to change it forever."

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D'Argo opens John's door and comes in, telling him to stop watching the show, offering a tape of a football game John brought on board. "State wins, no big plays: put mine back in." He tosses himself off the couch and starts toward him. D'Argo levels: "Katratzi. We can't find it. Pilot searched every frequency..." John shakes his head and all his body: "No. The Scarrans have Aeryn in a box, D'Argo." Known. John demands to know why he knows the word. "Katratzi. Katratzi." D'Argo reminds him that Sikozu overheard the Scarrans say it while arresting Grayza. "No," says John crazily. "From before! You know it too." D'Argo shakes his head, worried about his friend, and tells him to get some sleep and stop watching the horrible show. "They *hate* you guys," John says, appalled. D'Argo is grace personified: "Well, I liked it there." John asks if he's seen it yet, and D'Argo says he has not. "You should. It's educational: They're not ready." The loss of hope, now, so far from home. It's broken and sad. D'Argo says they'll have to move on, and start asking around on planets. John stutters and stammers and says they won't know, and he knows this for no reason, and please put the tape back in, and points wordlessly at the screen. Like a child.

D'Argo puts in a different tape, instead. Olivia says that John has changed -- as he screws around with a photo album -- for the better. In some ways it's true. "He's even more thoughtful than he was. He studies everything keenly before deciding what to do." I don't know who she's talking about! Bobby interviews John, who's sitting on the Crichton staircase -- his face is framed by the stair-rail's carving. A heart. "I'm here with IASA Commander John Crichton, the first and only human to boldly go where no man has gone before. You spent over three years in deepest, darkest space..." John leans his head on his hand and looks at him as he speaks. "Battling aliens and evil races...What was the worst part?" John says that it was the "complete and utter lack of toilet paper," then gets a serious smile. He holds up an old black-and-white photo. "Missing family." The picture is of his mother. Leslie. He is framed in love. "When you got back, what was the most different about Earth?" John says nothing: "Earth's pretty much the same."

Bobby: "Are you different?" And there are two Johns, in that moment, with the same look. John on the video; John on the couch on *Moya*, watching with us. And for just a second, there's a look I don't ever want to see on another man's face. Is he different? He's broken, hollowed out, skin scraped with glass from the inside. Is he different? He's terrified, all the time, one tiny man trying to keep the devils of the universe from shredding up his home -- both of them -- worse than they've already done. He's haunted by all the things he's done, and all the things they've done to him, even here in his repose, even framed in love he is terrified. He is a killer. He is a man who has taken what was most precious to him and crushed it in his hands. He's caused death and heartbreak. He has suffered both of these. He has traded science for violence on a hundred planets, made choices no man should ever have to make, under the harsh light of a hundred suns, and he has broken his own heart and had it broken for him more times than you can count. He has been tortured and hounded and raped. Is he different?

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"Yeah, I'm different. Things that used to bother me don't bother me that much anymore. The world seems smaller. I keep waiting for something to happen...and I have to remind myself when it doesn't happen, that that's *normal*." What he said. Edith Anderson pinches at us: "Post-Traumatic Shock Syndrome. It's hard to tell without examining him, but from this little snippet of tape, I'm most concerned about his constantly waiting for something to happen. This suggests he's been under enormous and continuous stress." And if you were the lead character on a weekly sci-fi adventure show, you'd have room to talk. I like this little moment not only because I am unrepentantly emo, but also because it recycles the fact of the show back on itself: You think the rate at which things happen to these people is unrealistic? Try living it. It'll fuck you up!

Sikozu sits, tapping her boot on a cushion, as Chiana walks by and notices her not looking for Aeryn. They discuss this at length, Chiana being the only person in the universe less willing to take no for an answer than John himself. Sikozu admits to keeping John in the dark about how she's given up, because he needs to believe, and rolls her eyes at Chiana: "They're not lying," she sighs, about never having heard of Katratzi. "How can you tell if they're not lying? You can't tell when I'm lying!" says Chiana, getting right up in her grill. "Yes we can," says Sikozu, coming a little too close to home for comfort: "We all can." And she twists the knife, leaning close: "You open your mouth, and words come out of it." Chiana grabs hell out of Sikozu and throws her at the console again: "Don't you lie to Crichton." Sikozu laughs at her, but stands more calmly. Chiana orders her to keep checking; finally Sikozu's had enough. "All right, I'm done. You try!" She leaves, tired and too disheartened to hear that silence again. Alone, Chiana stares at the console.

Bobby approaches Noranti in the kitchen, where she's kicking a totally cute pulled-back hairstyle, with braids hanging down around her face and drop earrings. She looks -- I know! -- very pretty. She's making rat poison. "Gonna kill a few?" asks Bobby knowingly, and he angles in on the glass dishes into which she's grinding her stuff. "On the contrary," Noranti jokes. "The rats asked me to make this so that they can kill some humans." This is like the coolest she ever is, on this show. She's maybe the best part of the whole episode. "Every planet has its indigenous potions," she says in a lofty voice, "just waiting to be blended and discovered! I'm playing!" He asks -- as John paces in *Moya*, watching -- what Noranti thought about South America. She turns to face him. "Very verdant -- uh, 'green.' No green people, though: now, *that's* a shame." Bobby mentions a rumor that her third eye scared some people, she shrugs but you can tell she's a little put off. I love how vain she is. "Something about witchcraft. They were very fearful. ...Rygel's going down to sort it all out." Dr. Garrett Hamilton, the hopeful anthropologist, appears. "I was in South America when she came through: many of the 'miracles' she's credited with have yet to unravel under scrutiny." He tries so hard. An anonymous commentator, voice distorted, is identified as "High Level Administrative Source, Intelligence Community": "We're fairly certain we know how she...cured the...blind boy in Brazil." As Noranti talks animatedly, we return to Hamilton: "Why is it so hard for us to believe that someone from another planet can do things that we find extraordinary? Isn't she, herself, extraordinary? Just by being here?" I'll say.

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Noranti speaks to the camera: "I like that you're always striving to reach higher. Hoping for a better tomorrow. It's the quality that first attracted me to your uncle." That humans dream? "Yes! You're so ignorant, but you never give up. Even in the face of insurmountable odds." Fletcher (the sociologist who's afraid we're reaching some kind of social critical mass with the introduction to aliens) smiles hugely. "Listen to what she's saying about us! *Humans never give up*. Now, for that to become impressed upon an alien mind -- this simple fact that we would tend to take for granted ourselves -- becomes validation that we eventually *will fit in*! Never give up!" There's an awful part of me that thinks he's airing his own shit at this point, every time I see the episode, but you shouldn't let that make you think I have anything against sociologists. They all talk like that. Before he can pull out his copy of *Slim's Table* and bore us all into the fearsomest Death By Ethnography, we turn back to the video. Noranti offers to mix something up to get Bobby's voice to drop; he declines the offer, but she's clearly feeling affectionate: she leans crazy and manic into the camera, woggling her face all over like the best grandma on the best day ever: "*Watch out for the rats! They go for the young ones first!*" This episode does more for the Association For Loving The Hell Out Of Noranti than...any episode, ever. She's a new woman! Olivia Crichton tells us all about it: "She's actually really spiritual. You should hear her stories about religions of all the worlds she's visited! Really an eye-opener. So much cruelty, and so much kindness." And that's Noranti: no filter to distinguish between the Zhaans and the Rygels, so somehow she gets the best out of them both. I love that lady. She sits now outside on the deck, surrounded by a plethora of religious accoutrements: books and cards and a small silver skull; a crucifix. "What constitutes a good religion?" she asks Bobby, her hands folded. "Respect for life? Do unto others." She asks: "Belief in a higher being?" He says of course, she's not so sure. Me neither. "Hmm. Hypocrite." Bobby wonders if she means him, or everybody. "Well? Your religions justify killing, and all forms of atrocious behavior." She looks at the crucifix. So much cruelty, and so much kindness. Bobby, troubled: "Yeah, that's...hard to deal with."

Sociologist Fletcher: "Miss Noranti is not wrong, that we have a history and culture of killing that we continually attempt to wallpaper with justifications and platitudes. I see nothing wrong with what she's saying." This last as though his life depended on it. I think I've made my own position clear. "See," she says. "Killing is often a part of life. What's hypocritical is to condemn, and then make allowances when the situation suits." So, Bobby struggles: "It's okay to kill?" Absolutely, she smiles. "Sometimes you *must*." But that's not what she's saying: she is saying that the second you divide yourself into the half that is loved and the half that is condemned, you've cut yourself off from God. You divide Canaan and that which is indivisible, and the next thing you know, your eyes go red and you start spiking Rygel and tiny cute little birds. It pulls in upon itself, like a black hole, and you create evil in the world. You learn to fear that which is part of you, and if you're divided in your own house how the hell can you relate to the world outside? Bobby asks if she's in a cult -- "...like a witch or something?" -- and about half the viewing audience rolls their eyes with a grunt of frustration, but Noranti makes everything better: she holds up the skull beside her face and gives the best possible answer with the best possible wacky face. "*Not at the moment!*"

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Reverend Nathan Buckley, National Religious Leader and Gross Stereotype of the Moral Majority, which is neither, and which takes the name of so many good Americans in vain for its own purposes. "If her religion justifies killing, then she's not someone I want telling us what to believe." Um? Ivan Chanderpaul, Federation of American Buddhists: "There is never an occasion when murder is allowable. Life is the font of all that we hold with respect." Wow, not getting it. Usually the Buddhists are a bit quicker on the uptake with this stuff. General Harwell Zawicki, United Nations Space Command: "After she's had to kill somebody, then I'll accept her pronouncements." Well, at least the Buddhists are ahead of you, sir. What in the hell does that have to do with anything? At all? And she has, and she will, and it will be holy, which is more than I can say for you. Stop talking about yourself if you're going to be on TV. Noranti fiddles with a deck of cards on the table in front of her as Bobby asks if religions hate each other where she comes from. "Oh, good heavens no! *Religions* are grand, lofty ideals. Religious *followers*, now...that's a different story." Wars? "Unspeakable." So we're not so different? "That's nothing to be proud of." Yes. I wish Zhaan had been able to meet her. She would have loved her so much; they could have saved each other. Makes me sad.

Dr. Jayne O'Connor, Criminal Psychologist, Duke University: "This is a dangerous woman. She effortlessly twists her simple logic into something that is almost believable, until you look deeper...and it unravels. Not the kind of personality you would want running around unchecked." It unravels. You're a criminal psychologist: it's your life's work to unravel. Meanwhile, the rest of us will go on being happy. Back to Monroe: "Sometimes it's hard to remember that just a few short months ago..." John fast-forwards; stops as Aeryn begins to speak. "Well, what you have to understand is, while cultures and civilizations may vary wildly from socially primitive to hyper-mechanized, there is still a uniformity in the way that people conduct their lives." We're back in the interview set. "You're saying wherever you go in the Universe, we're all the same?" Essentially, yes. In that way, Earth is no different from other planets. "Other species, from different worlds...do they have relationships? Marriage? Children?" Aeryn...answers not actually the question he asked, but the one on her mind. She's got so many tells, even Monroe knows when to push and prod and bite. "Most definitely," she says. "...There are limits. The genetic patterns would have to support such a union." Wow, I think he was asking if Sebaceans got married, not if you and Crichton were S-I-T-T-I-N-G, but since the whole point of these two episodes is the fact that John still doesn't know if your child is his, thanks for getting us there that much quicker, babe. No more going on TV until we sit down and have a serious talk, because you just handed him not only his next sound bite, but the rest of the series that's left: "And could a Sebacean, such as yourself, procreate with a human male?" Her mouth drops open as she traces back and realizes she just did that to herself. And then just stops thinking altogether. John rewinds. "And could a Sebacean, such as yourself, procreate with a human male?" Her mouth drops open as she traces back and realizes she just did that to herself. And then just stops thinking altogether. "...Officer Sun?" She does not speak. If she could smile, she would, and we'd see her again the last way we saw her: unspeaking, unable to talk

about the baby. Unable to bring up any emotion at all. Shocked into nothingness. John stares intently at Aeryn on the screen.

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Pictures, images, memories, bioloids: everything but the real deal. Which -- if the baby's not his -- is as close to the truth as we'll get. I think this is where God steps in, honestly. Aeryn on the screen turns to John, her voice like an echo: "I believe Katratzi to be some sort of base. Highly guarded." John blinks, not the least because VCRs are usually the province not of God but of his opposite number, and rewinds the tape again. "...Officer Sun?" She does not speak. If she could smile, she would, and we'd see her again the last way we saw her: unspeaking, unable to talk about the baby. Unable to bring up any emotion at all. Shocked into nothingness. John stares intently at Aeryn on the screen. Aeryn: "Uh...uh...uh..." She tilts her head, blinks; however long this is taking you know for her it's twice, five times as long. "Yes," she smiles. "I was just thinking. Well...there's no way to be sure at this point. However, our physiologies do appear to be very similar." Remarkably so, he notes, and she nods. Several times. Out of her depth in every way.

John continues to stare as R. Wilson Monroe returns to the *Alien Visitation* backdrop: "Was Officer Sun's hesitation at my question an honest moment of introspection? Or was it something more? These are now the issues we grapple with." (P.S. This is not Monroe talking either. Not really, and maybe not actually.) "How much to trust? How open do we allow ourselves to become? Do we view an alien commingling of our gene pool as a favorable step towards integration into a larger community, or as a threat?" And what if it's a lie?

Aeryn in the kitchen, joined by Bobby. Buddhist guy: "Well, one can only hope that a union between those of Earth and elsewhere is possible -- such marriages will foster bonds of family, and generate trust between disparate peoples." Mean old Edith Anderson: "If you thought children of race-mixed parents took abuse at the hands of other children, wait until one is born with tentacles!" Gross. Your speech betrays you. AGAIN. Stop fucking talking until you can get your mind around what an asshole you're making yourself out to be. Olivia Crichton laughs, onscreen: "Seriously now, what is the big deal? Firstly, I do not believe Aeryn's pregnant with John's baby and, secondly, if she was?" Olivia shrugs, full of love for them both.

On video: John at a workbench on *Moya*; Bobby's spying between struts in the bay, whispering quietly to himself: "Am I going to get in trouble for taping this..." John and his sister, having a talk. It begins with this: "Not of the physical kind, no." Olivia joins him, staring him down. "You gonna be okay?" Fine, he admits, but never the same. "Aeryn," she says suddenly, into the air, and he begs her to stop. She reminds her whining, begging little brother of his long-ago attempts to hide his crush on Jill Steiner; finally John gives: "What's my tell?" His lips; when he sees Aeryn, "they soften just a bit." I never thought of it that way, but she's right. Aeryn, he explains, has "a word for us: Yesterday." She snorts, and he can't look up or at anybody, barely raises his voice above a murmur: "She have a tell?" She does: "Her eyes. She's waiting for you." She's waiting for you.

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As John begs Olivia to change the subject -- and we wonder when this happened, if it was before or after Christmas Eve, and how retarded that means John actually is --

we cut to John on *Moya*. Watching quietly. All that drama, so recently solved, so lovingly. All that Christmas pain wiped away; Christmas in fact postponed and played again, the last day he saw her alive. The last time they were together, they were writing a better Christmas over the one they so effectively destroyed in that house, and this scene he's watching contains within it the seeds of his perfect happiness and he didn't even know it. How rogue would you go, if that were taken from you? Chiana joins him, where he leans on his chamber door, and silently puts her hand in his. He squeezes it gratefully, and weakly, and holds onto it for everything he's worth.

Chiana's hand, saying he is not alone.

Sociology Hamilton, back on his personal shit: "I, for one, *like* the idea that we're not alone. So why not go all the way? Become part of the cultural fabric of the new world in which we'll live? If they're in love, they're in love." He spreads his arms out and shrugs; John caresses Chiana's hand as they watch the screen together.

There are ways in which Karen Shaw has accomplished what Namtar did for Pilot and Aeryn, I think. Or maybe it was always there and I'm just obsessed with Karen Shaw: if the latter, I think, it's just heartbreaking now because Chiana's spent the entire season refusing to be touched by anybody, including John. Shrinking back, never front and center in her fear, but it accumulates and you see a space around her, negative space around her like a force field. And to see her so sweetly touching him again, touching Rygel, grinning and laughing and teasing D'Argo; to see her with the old fight back, telling Sikozu to fuck off. Even though Sikozu's doing the best she can, well: you have to cheer a little, right? Thank God for Chiana. "You know this word Katratzi," he says, and she shakes her head. "Wasn't a question. You heard it with me." Only from Sikozu; he says again, emphatically, that it was with him. She won't lie to him. Not ever. "No."

Christmas; Olivia's telling Aeryn she didn't need to buy her a present. "Under the tree?" Aeryn asks, smelling her way in to family tradition, and Olivia smiles at her: "Yeah, absolutely." As Aeryn crosses in front of the camera she tells Bobby hello, dropping some gifts; he asks if there's one for him and Olivia chides him. "No, actually...um, yours is so big that it wouldn't fit under the tree," Aeryn says sweetly. She was already in, and still thought she had to push. It makes both episodes sadder, to see how welcomed she really was, and never entirely bought it: "Cool," grins Bobby behind the camera. "'Cause I got you one, too."

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Chiana asks when John will give up. What the moment will be. "I don't." But he's got to give up sometime, she says, determined to be honest with him. "No. I don't."

Bobby asks Olivia to shoot his picture with Aeryn; she goofs off into the camera very believably -- like with John in her last episode, she gives good goofy -- and says she was thinking of shooting him. Bobby awkwardly puts an arm across Aeryn's back and admits they've made him the coolest kid in school; Aeryn assures him he was pretty cool before.

Chiana asks John where they'll find her, his mouth goes hard. "We find her." Chiana suggests that, all things being ruined, he could still return to Earth. "Not without Aeryn," he promises. It's not anger, it's just the hollow determination of a man with one star in the whole sky. It's not anger; it's love.

"When you're born into military service the way I was," Aeryn explains to Bobby. "It's deemed best to not have any ties to anyone but your unit." He points the camera at her face. "No brothers or sisters? Aunts or uncles?" He sits down next to her before the camera. "Didn't you miss that?" Merry Christmas: "Only once I was exposed to it." Chiana complains to John: "They don't like her there. They don't like any of us." John just looks at her, and tells her she watches too much TV. It's getting harder; education is at less of a premium as the footage continues. Do you let your TV get you down, or do you learn from it? Chiana whispers, "Yep." As Monroe signs off for another commercial break, John almost spits. "Bet this sumbitch wins an Emmy." Okay, now I'm *sure* there's a joke there, but it's probably in the commentaries and I'm not watching those for this show. I think we can probably guess.

"Amidst all the readily identifiable dissimilarities between our human race and the alien visitors we've been learning about, occasionally on these startling videotapes we come upon a moment that seemingly unites us in spirit across endless chasms of space." That was more tortured than any sentence I have ever written. Good one, Monroe. We cut now to Chiana sitting in the bushes, her eyes gone that black that tell you her heart is breaking. She's holding something small and broken in her hands, and whispering to it: "It's okay. It's okay. It's okay." Bobby comes around on her, in the bushes. "Is that a dead rat?" I almost started crying right then. What did Einstein say about ripples? What did that guy say about Noranti's mere presence warping the world? Simply by existing, the Moyans have brought change and destruction to the world. Simply by standing in that kitchen and doing her work, she's broken Chiana's heart. The whole episode basically just says that over and over; trust me to only feel it once Chiana got involved. "He was my friend. We were just playin'... He just stopped outside the kitchen to eat something and just..." She pets the body, covers it with her sweater and her glove. Hides it from the world. She leans over, and kisses it on the head, and hugs it to her chest. "It's okay." Smallest and most precious, and the fact that it's a rat and not a bunny, well, that's sad in a Chiana kind of way. Olivia: "The more time you spend with Chiana -- and the others -- the more you realize, with incredible joy and relief, that we're not that dissimilar."

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Bobby watches D'Argo on the deck at Chez Alien, looking out over the water: "What are you doing?" D'Argo breathes. "I am absorbing beauty." Bobby asks if that means he likes Earth, and D'Argo smiles to himself. "I didn't think I did at first, but I'm...beginning to realize it's one of the better places I've visited. It reminds me of my own planet, about ten thousand cycles ago. It was meant to be undisciplined and adventurous." Just like John. Fletcher is agog: "*Imagine!* Think of how we view ourselves: a sophisticated culture, growing, evolving...then look at how he views us: 'undisciplined and adventurous.' As time goes on, I predict we'll be forced to realign every concept by which we judge ourselves." You could draw a line in the pundits and some of them would see God in every detail and some would see fear everywhere. What's most scary, and most true, is how most of them fall somewhere in the middle. "They say you're a great warrior," Bobby prods. "That's an accident of birth. There are better things to do with your life." Bobby asks if he's ever killed anyone with his tongue, and D'Argo gets a little intense, coming closer and closer, trying to make the point and ending up being more menacing than he might think. "Bobby, my tongue

contains adaptive venom. The victim takes in only enough to lose consciousness. No one dies." Bobby asks to see. D'Argo says no chance. Dr. Adrian Walker, Xenobiologist: "Look, you see only differences: tentacles, a tongue with venom. Everything about him screams ALIEN. Now, close your eyes. Listen." I didn't know xenobiology included the hurling of anvils like cabers, but it's a developing science after all. Bobby tells D'Argo he was "good on *Letterman*," and D'Argo fidgets adorably. "Yeah, thanks. Um, yeah...I thought everyone was laughing *with* me, so..." One of my favorite short stories of all time: "My Appearance," by David Foster Wallace. Find it, read it. (The other one is "Good Old Neon," *ibid* and ditto.) Things begin to spiral south.

"For every instant when we may be lulled into accepting these alien visitors as perhaps nothing more than peculiar-looking versions of people we know here on Earth, there comes another moment on these startling videotapes that seemingly shatters any illusion of potential coexistence."

Bobby hounds D'Argo down the corridors of *Moya*, begging for something as he says again no. Why not? "For the same reasons that I've been saying to you *ad nauseam*. Why is it so important?" Bobby begs him to admit that it's "cool," which I completely agree is reason enough. D'Argo nods sheepishly: "It's cool." He asks Bobby to promise not to tell anybody, and to turn the camera off. Bobby, behind the camera, puts the camera on *Moya*'s floor and lies that he's turned it off. "You ready?" He hisses, and lashes out with his tongue. Bobby grunts and drops to the floor, knocking the camera so that it only shows D'Argo's boots. Which tap their toes a couple of times, as D'Argo looks down, and then run off hysterically to get Noranti on the case. "I would have to say that we need to prevent these sorts of encounters from happening outside a research facility," says one of the kinder pundits; Buddhist guy points out that it was a learning experience: "The boy did not die. He is wiser." Anderson returns again to the worry about the aliens having "the run of our planet," without getting the full data on their psychology. Which was, of course, self-explanatory even in that brief clip, which is the point.

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I hate this part. Chiana stands before a mirror in a bath towel, a lipstick in hand and blobs of color and blush all over herself. She looks kind of amazing. "What is this *for*?" Bobby tells her lipstick is for lips. "...I ask because my grandfather says you're a great bellwether on who we are as a species." She takes a huge bite of the lipstick and smiles at him around it: "Bellwether. Do males put these on their faces?" Bobby says that in his particular family, no, but for a second cousin no one talks about. Cruelty and kindness and all the monsters outside the house you decided to build. Chiana calls it a waste, and rubs the lipstick across the top of her head. "Make-up?" She points to the makeup all around the sink: "Why are there so many colors?" She holds up a compact of eye shadows; Buddhist guy calls it a condemnation of materialism. "One must look past the physical and see the spiritual side." He calls her "highly evolved," which is still not the point. Dr. Edmund "Actually Brian Henson" Johnston, Professor of Cognitive Behaviorism, Stanford University: "Remembering for a moment her otherworldly origins, Chiana's perspective is consistent, well-thought-out and, in my view, correct." She continues to lecture Bobby, about to spin Cognitive Behaviorism spinning on its ass. "I've seen water rooms like this that have two toilets,

two showers, a sink and a tub...and a bubbling tub, bubbling." She laughs, dancing around, wild, explaining this to Bobby. On *Moya*, Chiana and Rygel sit watching the video together.

"How many places do you need water to come from? You can wash up in the toilet!" Bobby scoffs, but she kneels down at the toilet and scrubs her face with its water.

"See? It's clean." Bobby, behind the camera, shudders. As he zooms in, she takes offense, not understanding but clearly being laughed at. Children destroy innocence better than any grownup. As the pundits hold forth, she angrily pushes Bobby out of the bathroom and shuts the door on him. There's no way she could have known; no way she could know that this show got cancelled because of its preoccupation with the silly fears and biology paranoia that inhabit our darker places. There's nothing worse she could have done than put her face in the toilet; and nothing more innocent or harmless.

Even the experts, even the ones formerly on her side and on the side of the aliens, recoil. "What we're seeing is a very young, disturbed alien girl." "Clearly a passionate, though troubled young lady." Bishop Mervyn Vosko: "This young woman should not be allowed near any impressionable child. She is clearly dangerous, troubled and a bad influence." Dr. Anderson: "I defy anyone..." but Chiana presses a button back on *Moya*, turning the TV off.

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Rygel sighs, and says pitifully: "I'm sick of this popcorn." And I don't mean he's asking for pity. I mean he should be pitied. "I just feel sorry for Crichton," says Chiana, lying and being so much stronger as John goes down, down, down. Less innocent than she was just a few minutes ago, and so much stronger than we've seen her. "Noranti gave me this stuff that'll help 'im sleep. You think I should go find him?" Rygel sighs, older and far away. "No. Give it to me." She blows the dust into his face and he breathes in deep, tired and rejecting food so that he can sleep -- pretend this isn't happening. "Feel sorry for Aeryn," he says. That's who he's thinking of; that's why he's so tired all of a sudden. "He'll get over it," Rygel mumbles. Chiana closes her eyes and massages Rygel's neck. "I don't think he will, Ryg. You know, no matter how long it takes, I don't think he'll lose hope." The word for what gets you every time. How far would you go if you could actually see the finish line? How deep could you fall if you knew the rock bottom was coming up to catch you? What deals would you make? John reflects, hearing Aeryn's voice again. "I believe Katratzi to be some sort of base." He sees her face, a flash on the screen. "Highly guarded." Her face, again and again: "They wouldn't have taken Grayza anywhere less secure..."

Rygel sits on a couch at Chez Alien, surrounded by ridiculous amounts of junk food. "Who's winning?" Bobby asks. "Me," says Rygel. This close to the end of the series, I can just go ahead and say he's my hero forever. "I mean the *game*," Bobby laughs. "Who cares?" Rygel just put himself on a Noranti level of love for the episode. Bobby wows at Rygel's crazy amount of sugary crap, and Rygel tells him to go get his own. "What do you like best on Earth?" Sugar, Rygel says. Anything with sugar: "[At home] it's used as a poison. Here, you can get it everywhere!" He laughs crazily and tells Rygel he also loves "grease" and "fat"; Bobby zooms in on a plate of burgers. Dr. Fletcher laughs and calls this a level of understanding about our culture that we're unwilling to admit. "As an outsider, his views are a prismatic tool for us to perhaps

examine ourselves." Which nobody ever, ever does, so keep dreaming. "So, all in all, you could live here," Bobby prods. Rygel nods: "As long as I get to keep my slaves." Bobby clarifies that they're paid servants, hired by the government to make the aliens feel at home, and Rygel's like, "You're kidding! They come running when I call. If you want me to feel at home, bring me some real slaves." Bobby asks if they're anything else he's into, besides eating food: "Gamble: You can do it over the phone. You can call *females*, too. 1-900-SLUT-GIRL." Alana Lichtenstein, Outside Counsel, Immigration and Naturalization Service: "I was privileged to have interviewed the Dominar during his visit. Despite what I'm sure many viewers are thinking, this is the ruler of over 600 billion subjects. He must be doing something right." Like wanking on the phone, and being a deposed monarch of nothing. I love Alana Lichtenstein. "A little known fact about this, the biggest story of the new millennium. There is at least one person who makes a credible claim that our alien visitors have been here before. In 1985, to be exact..." That trooper from "[Kansas](#)" appears: "Welcome Robert Shelmacher, former Sheriff of Orlando." He's older but recognizable and a HITG, in orange pants and a tan sport coat, with something weird on the floor beside him. "Still Sheriff. Always Sheriff. No alien's gonna run me off my job!" This part's awkward and weird on many levels, as he explains his adventures back in 1985: "Ears, tentacles, Cher." And he holds up his gourd, which has straw sticking out of it like eyebrows: "Their leader." Monroe starts to notice that Shelmacher is fucking fucked up, but continues. "In the Sheriff's defense, way back in 1985 he filed a report with the FBI, giving what we now realize are fairly accurate descriptions of General D'Argo, Noranti, Officer Sun and Dominar Rygel." The files remain sealed, and no one in the government will talk about it. "Can you tell us what you remember of that time, Sheriff?" Shelmacher goes nuts at this point about how they kidnapped Johnny and sabotaged the *Challenger* to ground us and they put microchips in our heads but he's got a hat with tinfoil inside, and they are planning to make us fat so that we can be defeated through fatty foods and he's been in an institution for the last eighteen years, but at least he's still: "Lean! Undefeatable! Vegetables! Fruit! No saturated fat!" Which is a lot of words to say this: he's the rat, and worth your pity too.

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The way that John causes ripples in the world everywhere he goes, and we have to watch them and take responsibility for them, fast-forwarding to see that the best we could wasn't quite good enough and there was collateral damage. That's kind of like real life, if you're brave enough to admit it. Chiana dances on the deck at Chez Alien; asks Bobby to dance and he begs off. She laughs and does a silly dance for him: "I'm drivin', I'm drivin'...and reverse! Reverse!" She laughs and heaves. Still dancing, curious. Innocent: "Bobby, what do you think of sex?" He's bewildered. She tosses her hair: "Sex." He asks why she's asking, and she says she's curious. He's thirteen, he hasn't had sex. "Thirteen? What are you waiting for?" He protests that it's against the law, and she's shocked. "To have sex?" At thirteen? Yes. "Well, that's...felled. Who cares when you have it?" Starting with his mom? She continues to dance, and a lightbulb goes off: "Okay, so why are all the little girls wearing all those clothes?" Like she's got him in a conundrum. She does. "Because they see it on the TV and in the magazines." But *somebody*, Chiana stresses, sold them the clothes, "so *somebody* wants them to have sex." It was never Bobby's innocence she was after, at all. Ever.

Again. She's not talking about sex. It's heartbreaking. She's so subtle, dancing around this shit over and over. I love her so much. I don't want to talk about it except to say that the surface of what she's saying is also true, and also terrible. And not in a "what about the children" way, I mean in a real honest-to-God way that there are men who are happier with things the way they are. Buddhist guy cheers for her: "There is an innocence about her that is wonderfully contagious!" Bishop Vosko joins the list of assholes across the universe that lines up to call her a whore. Olivia Crichton scoffs at all comers: "Oh please. Don't make more out of that than is there. She was not coming on to Bobby." Even the xeno guy's like, don't be gross: "I'm not a psychologist, but that's rather innocent, hmm? ...You get more juice from [Dawson's Creek](#)." On which subject I have been warned to shut the eff up, so I shall. ["Not much else to say, is there?" -- Sars] The video goes dark.

Bobby stands alone in *Moya*, talking to the air: "Okay, it's working. What did you want to show me?" Sikozy's voice, kind and friendly -- for her, which it turns out is a lot -- and it occurs to me that this episode is a love letter to the supporting cast. Everybody comes off brilliant in this, I suspect because the episode is designed to make you recoil out of disgust and right back into love. "Curiosity causes you to look in unexpected places...and find unexpected rewards." Her hand extends down, gorgeously, into the shot from above, tossing him a comms badge. "Have a go." Bobby smiles and comms to "Uncle John," to "Commander John Crichton," and John comms back with a question: "What the hell are you doing with the comms?" It's such a great little moment, all of it. Grace and humor in the funniest places. I might like this part almost as much as I hate watching the Chiana bit before. "Uh, Sikozy let me try it?" Sikozy walks down the bulkhead, light as air, and hops to her feet. "Where are you?" John: "Australia. I'm workin', Bobby." The video replays: Sikozy, light as air. The xenobiologist has an orgasm, but you can't begrudge him. Hamilton wows: "I met this young female and had no idea!" Cut to Sikozy standing in the kitchen with a dog, as Dr. Anderson tells a truth of sorts, even in her ugly hate: "In my opinion, there is nothing about the alien Sikozy that is not infused with anger and disdain. *E.T.*, she is not." But did you see the part with Bobby? So fun!

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Sikozy walks down a corridor on *Moya*, speaking from the places Dr. Anderson can't see. Tired still: "Pilot? Do you see any value in us continuing?" Pilot admits that, "despite his strong feelings for Officer Sun," he doesn't. Dude, when Pilot gives up? Fuck! Sikozy sets her shoulders back and offers to tell John; of course, she says this just down the hall from his room. "Tell me what?" She stands beyond the door, just like everyone else. He's alone with it and has been all throughout. "We cannot find Aeryn. We cannot locate this Katratzi. No one has even heard the name." He insists, again, that she heard it. "Someone said it on this ship." My friend Will, who hasn't seen most of the series, took this moment to ask, "Is this whole show about this dude going nuts? That's so sad." I didn't answer him except to say, "Fucking wait for the next one, smarty."

Sikozy promises him, again, that she hasn't heard the word on *Moya*: "No, I heard it on the planet where we left Aeryn." He opens the door, finally, but grabs her arm and drags her inside the room, shoving her roughly. "What are you not telling me?" She does not plead; Sikozy never pleads: "I'm telling you everything," she says, cold as

ice. "You're *lying*! You're not telling me! You know the name Katratzi!" She heads for the door and he shoves her again. It's ugly. "You have been nothing but lying from the moment you got on board this ship..." She finally loses her composure: hours spent looking, asking, speaking that hated tongue. For this? "*I do not know!*" John pulls his gun on her. "I will not let Aeryn die! Katratzi!" She shakes her head, sickened by him, by seeing him like this in his extremity: "It is not by my providence if she lives or dies. It is not my fault if she lives or dies. And it is not my will if she lives or dies!" Katratzi, he screams. Katratzi, Katratzi, Katratzi, he screams. "Crichton, *listen to yourself*. Everything lives, and everything dies! Whether you wish it to or not! And you have to deal with it!" It's not him she's convincing. Everything changes.

Sikozu is humming, on the screen. She has a beautiful voice. There's so much about her we'll never get to see. John suddenly turns, on *Moya*, to stare at Sikozu on the screen. (Images, bioloids -- John has no reason to trust her any more than he does Aeryn; just like with Aeryn in this episode, it's the screen that tells the truth.) Still humming sweetly, Sikozu holds up a silver ashtray, turning it this way and that, her face half cut off from the screen. John looks from Sikozu, still breathing hard and upset, back to her image on the screen: humming, face half-hidden by the steel silver of an ashtray become a mask. The sweet sound and his realization. He lowers his pistol and turns back toward the TV. How many times have we seen him like this? Retreating into his mind and his ugliness and depression, striking out at everything and then bam -- everything goes away, and it's just him. The least awesome John Crichton on the show. He sits down and picks up the remote control; a tear runs down his cheek. He rewinds, fast-forwards, as Sikozu hums again and again, and gazes into the dog's eyes, and forward to the hum again, turning the ashtray over in her hands. Recognizing and admiring its beauty, and her face half cut off from the screen. The tape stops and we flash to "Unrealized Reality," as John abuses the Stark that Sikozu could be.

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"Pull yourself together," he says, shaking her; she begs him to let her go. Now, he stares at the still image; Sikozu on Earth, half hidden in silver. Then, she screams at him: "You! You shoot me!" The Noranti that Rygel could be gets a reprieve as he turns his gun on Stark. "Shoot! Now!" He asks her again if she'll come back. She will. Stark always does. She looks up into light. "Katratzi."

John turns to Sikozu, who's too stunned by John's weirdness. She mouths, "What?" He turns back to the screen. Aeryn speaks, out of time, out of nothingness: "I believe Katratzi to be some sort of base, highly guarded. They wouldn't have taken Grayza anywhere less secure." Stark screams the name. John stares at the TV, tears running down his face. The hope he's held onto was a dream, a fantasy, a reality unrealized. The hope dies.

The hope surges into life. Tears running down his face as he realizes what he must do, he apologizes to Sikozu, who blinks. "Sumbitch deserves an Emmy," he says, and turns off the TV. His face goes cold, the edge of a knife. He stands, sniffing, and looks at Sikozu. But there's nothing to say.

John walks into Pilot's den: "Do you still know the location of that wormhole to Earth?" He does, he admits hesitantly. "Could you set a course, please?" This with the hysteria, that tired edge of a person out of his depth. Pilot stalls: "I'll...have to ask the

Captain." D'Argo enters, still so sympathetic; still so frightened for his friend. "D'Argo? Aeryn." D'Argo stares at him: "Wormholes? Earth? What?" John can't explain; they've already had a conversation twice the size you'd think, from the words on the page. "Look, it's complicated." D'Argo regards him, and whispers. "I understand that." He raises his voice again and addresses Pilot, who knows that tone in D'Argo's voice all too well. "I need not remind you that *Moya* is now phobic regarding wormholes..." John promises that they won't have to go all the way, still hysterical and begging. "Just get me close enough so that I can make it in my module!" D'Argo's confused: "You're not going back to Earth!" No, he says, he's not. "It's complicated." He looks at D'Argo, pleading.

"We need to maintain clarity of thought, healthy skepticism, and aggressive inquisitiveness. To that end, we at this network call upon the government to release all files pertaining to Officer Schelmacher's allegations of past visitation, and any other related matter. When the aliens return -- and they will -- we also urge an aggressive quarantine until the true nature of their presence is ascertained. Recall that the same extraterrestrials we behold with wonder, as they learn our language and dance to our music, also bear weapons, as well as potential illness, which could destroy us. Alien visitation is a reality. They've been here once, and we seem to have dodged the bullet. The truth is, can we be as certain the next time?"

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He's not talking about aliens and he never was. It's still about Aeryn, it's always about Aeryn. It's about Aeryn and John. How far can you trust her? If she's not who she seems to be, what's the use in going after her? Who's the daddy? Who's John in love with? Once you find love, what keeps your faith in it? You can't touch it, feel it, smell it. All you have is blind faith that she won't change shape again. The first and last question: where does this wormhole lead? This season is hard to understand; it's hard admitting these ambiguities when the show itself, not to mention all other television shows in the history of television, have held one belief sacrosanct: that love is forever, and unquestionable. Once you fall in love, that's it, that's your happy ending. John and Aeryn, through death and fear and pain and rage, have finally found each other. Even sexier, because they've got to be in secret, they've got to hide from Scorpius, and that keeps it fresh, but in the end, they win. The end. No body doubles, no bioloids, no lying images, no tabloid lies. Just John and Aeryn, together forever and ever, amen. Like marrying your high school sweetheart: safe and self-satisfied, forever and ever, amen.

How likely is that? If Season One was about finding her, and allowing her to find him, across all the galaxies. And if Season Two was about the darkness in him, staving her off, going crazy, eating itself. And if Season Three was about her discovery -- this just in! -- that happy endings don't exist; that *endings* don't exist. Then Season Four is about the question, old as time, the question the heart that loves has to answer every day, on into history: *How can you be sure?* What if she's a robot? What if she's an assassin, Harvey's Lovely Daughter, the laughing Pwintheth, the scowling doctor dominatrix? What if she hates you? What if she never loved you? What if she's a spy? What if she's a whore? What if she's been watching you fall in love, and fight it, and cried tears because that's what was required, to bring you home again? What if she's just keeping her eye on you? What if she's a terrorist, sneaking bombs and landmines

into your heart at every opportunity, and waiting for the chance to disappear forever? It's unavoidable and ugly: How can the heart that loves ever trust what it holds dearest? The only thing the show ever takes is what you love the most -- how can you be so sure that the next irony isn't just around the bend? How can you have faith in love, when the entire universe has its sights set on destroying love before all else? How can you be so stupid? How can you be so brave?

"I thank you for being with us; there will be more in the days and weeks ahead. But, for now, from New York, this is R. Wilson Monroe saying good night." And the lights go out.

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Scorpius lies on his back, in his bunk; the door has none of *Moya's* usual curves and lines, it's a lightning zigzag as sharp as knives. John stands beyond them. "You set me up." Scorpius turns his head to the door, almost lazily. "...Not that I care." He opens the door and enters, willingly. "I don't care 'bout much." He looks down at Scorpius: "War. Death. And wormholes: I don't care about the things you care about. Peacekeepers rule the Scarrans; Scarrans rule the Peacekeepers...let them rule together. Put your ass in a cage." Scorpius lies unmoving, a snake pretending it's asleep. "I care about one thing. One. God have mercy on my soul." John looks upwards, kneels beside Scorpius. Handing it over. The one thing the universe rewards is sacrifice. Yesterday's cunning plan and secret fear becomes today's proffered sacrifice. The one thing Scorpius can't know, he told us, was that Aeryn is the key. And now Aeryn is gone. Again.

"I think I'm gonna need your help, Mister Scarran half-breed, to get Aeryn back. Help me get her, and I will give you wormholes." (One scene! We got one scene of the secret make-outs! The world is cruel!) Scorpius opens his eyes by a fraction and turns his head by a fraction and he stays silent. "I have an idea of how to find the Scarran base. Aeryn for wormholes. That's the deal." You'd think just hearing him say it was bad enough; it'll get worse. We're trading science for somebody else's violence -- trading Scorpius's protection, too, for obsolescence. No matter how much Scorpius loves John, he's there to safeguard the knowledge. He's changed not at all, he's given up nothing. John is handing Scorpius his own death sentence in the same hand as he's giving the most hateful person in the universe the most powerful weapon imaginable. He's signing more death warrants than we have numbers to count. It's not just a deal with the devil, as we say. It's a deal with the devil in himself, that he made staring at the television, tears rolling down his face. It's not just that he's cutting a deal, it's that he's cutting the exact deal that Scorpius would have him cut. All those twisted Aurora plans, in Scorpius's twisted love for him, for John's strength, and for his soul. For his growth. Scorpius wins again. All of these and more are inscribed on John's face, which is indescribable. He backs away; Scorpius rises like the dead, turns his head. Looks at the door where John just was.

But John is gone.

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- Daring Aeryn To Love You -

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It's Scorpy, tellingly, giving us the previouslies. Mine are going to go a little differently, and also I moisturize: previously on *Farscape*, Earth said in no uncertain terms that John and his family on *Moya* and in fact everybody -- including Aeryn, for Pete's sake -- could go straight to hell. This provided the last little push John needed to say that in fact the whole universe could go fuck itself, and he sold Scorpius wormholes (which also means that, post the terms being met, Scorpius will have no use for him either) for his aid in locating his girlfriend. Whereabouts unknown (absent without leave) but with a whole lot of explaining to do. So you've got John, willing to conspire with demons and his own darkness, and to hell with everybody else, including himself, because without Aeryn none of those things mean anything anyway.

Aeryn sits in a cell on an unknown ship. The walls and bars are made of jagged metal. Her wrists are in chains. "There was one guard. I don't remember her face. She never told me her name. She told me a legend about how Sebaceans once had a god called...Djancaz-bru. Six worlds prayed to her. They built her temples, conquered planets...and yet, one day, she still rose up, and destroyed all six worlds. And when the last warrior was dying, he said: 'We gave you everything; why did you destroy us?' And she looked down upon him, and she whispered: *Because I can.*"

Scorpius follows John through *Moya*, protesting that Aeryn may well be dead. "The Scarrans will not kill her: they want to use her, to find me." Scorpius explains about how the Scarrans operate, and it is not good: "They will mind-rape her until she has no allegiance to you." John interrupts, no time for violation: "I'll find her before then." Scorpius knows better than anyone how long even Aeryn can resist them. John orders him to stop talking. "I'll find her." Again Scorpius tries and again he is denied: "I just want to make you aware of the improbability of what you propose..." John screams; Scorpius asks for John's plan, then, if he's going to be uppity.

Scorpius follows John into another room. "Don't interrupt before I finish, no matter how stupid it sounds." Scorpius sighs. "John..." John holds up a hand and recaps how the Stark that Sikozu could be -- on the weirdo *Moya*, which get ready for some recapper crack right there -- said "Katrati," and then the Sikozu that Sikozu actually *is* heard the same word when Aeryn was kidnapped. And John's convinced that this is a Scarran base and that Aeryn's being held on it. John confirms -- because union rules state that John must ask every person on this show eleven thousand times if they know where Katrati is, even though he now knows for a fact that they don't -- that Scorpius has no idea where it is. Scorpius gets his feathers ruffled a little bit here because he doesn't know about the rule. "So I figure if bizarro Stark knows the name of the base, he might know its location. That's it. Best I got. You got any better ideas?" -- Page 2 --

"If I help with this insanity, and we do get Aeryn back: you will tell me all you know about wormholes?" Scorpius is right up in his grill; John turns his head away, sick about it. "Every equation. Every formula." John finally looks him in the eye -- it's art, not science -- and stares him down: "Everything."

One of those mysterious and upsetting Season Four things happens where you need like ten minutes to sit there with the thing on pause going, "What the fuck?" The show's layers and stories and meanings have accreted to the point where they spontaneously curl up around themselves, like superstrings or DNA. Too much gravity, too many echoes, in every single second: *boing!* Except it's not a black hole, it's a

wormhole, if you're willing to take the time. Once you've Yensched, once you've had him in your head, once you've seen your lover in his clothing, how and where can you go from there? They have a mutual pact to protect each other, thanks to Aeryn and wormholes, so why all the drama now? The one thing John's never done is submit to him. He's had parts and parts of Scorpius in him; he's done the Chair and he's fought Harvey and called upon Harvey as a friend and killed him again, he's killed for Scorpius and been saved by him a million times; he's done his time in the hotbox. He's got Scorpius all over him, but he's never once asked for it. Never given in, because he's never had reason before. Now it's not just brain and hand and heart: it's blood. (But also this: the part of her that's hidden from him now, her child and her activities in the dark time, has been linked with Scorpius from the beginning. He's not just John's darkness now, he's hers too. The shadow and the anima, the hideous androgyny of Harvey's Lovely Daughter; and on the other side of the door is God.) Scorpius grabs John's hand and cuts a finger. Blood begins to drip from John's finger -- Scorpius holds it up, opens his mouth, and squeezes a drop onto his tongue. He then wraps his tongue around John's finger and draws it into his mouth, sucking. Hard. John...watches. Scorpius finally pulls John's finger from his mouth, lowers it, and hisses, staring into John's eyes.

...Okay actually maybe it's not all that mysterious in this case.

John makes light -- "What, are we in the mob?" -- which is more than I could do in that instance, and Scorpius breathes in sharply, cutting his own finger. Horrible Scorpius blood drips out. It doesn't look like John's blood, though: it looks like milk. *Okay?!* Scorpius has always found himself feeling out a paternal role toward John, put there by the universe: "This hurts but it's for your own good"; and now they're sucking blood and milk from each other. This is a terrible, terrible idea. It's rife with perversion.

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It's also called for, on every level. "Your turn." John looks at the blood, dripping. "Nosferatu. First instinct is always right." Scorpius explains: "Scarran Blood Vow." But, John protests, Scorpius *hates* everything Scarran. So then... "I will help...if you taste," Scorpius says, which is better than saying, "...So not the point, halfwit." Except that we left propriety around the time you started suckin', dude.

John rolls his eyes and stares a bit, and then sticks out his tongue, onto which a single droplet falls. He shuts his mouth with a quickness. Scorpius stares at him, shoves his thumb into his mouth, and sucks that too. He grins terribly and only a tiny bit, as though to say: *Okay, I know. The sucking is a bit much. But you kind of pissed yourself a little bit, right?*

Aeryn's cell, Aeryn's deal. "Look, Djancaz-bru. I know I'm not the sort of person who usually does this sort of thing, so I'm not quite sure what I'm supposed to be saying, except that I really...need your help. I need you to send me some sort of sign that he's coming for me. Can you do that?"

The cell door opens; Aeryn quickly averts her eyes as a Scarran male and a Sebacean woman enter. "I've given you time to consider. Are you ready to answer?" She nods to herself, still strong enough. "Yes." She crawls, still on her knees, facing the Scarran, then gets to her feet, grunting, to face him. Her wrists are still chained to the floor. "Stiinga-tuk. Wait, did I pronounce that correctly? Let me try that again: Stiinga-*took*. That's better." He blasts her with his heat breath and starts demanding to

know where Crichton is. She pleads and gasps and insists she doesn't know, even as the Scarran orders her to stop resisting and answer. Her face is contorted. After a commercialish amount of time, Aeryn gasps: "He's on *Moya*." The woman holds an instrument toward her, noting its reading: "Six hundred telliks and rising. If you don't stop you'll kill her." He shakes his head and says he's using no more force than usual. The woman, confused, stares at her instrument. "What do you know about Crichton's wormhole research?" demands the Scarran -- Aeryn's at 620 -- and she finally answers, her face twisted in the heat: "I don't know anything. He didn't tell me anything." The woman orders the giant Scarran to stop, and after a second he stops with the flames. Aeryn grunts and passes out, sliding down the wall. The Scarran stares down at her: "What's the matter with this one? Is she weak, or is she faking?" The woman shakes her head: "She's not faking." He says some more shit and leaves; the woman stays behind. I have no love of Peacekeepers but I kind of cannot believe this lady helping a Scarran beat up on a Sebacean like that. She's fully in the sights of my judgment right now. ...But don't you kind of want to know? Aren't there questions about Aeryn you'd like answered? She's been hiding from us, too, and it's been hard.

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D'Argo and Chiana attend John down a corridor, confirming that he's going to weirdo *Moya*. Chiana worries that he'll end up back on Earth and screw everything up again. Only she doesn't say "screw," she says "mess." He disagrees: "No, I got this hum in my head like a whale." They discuss whales ("Think big fish with sonar.") and D'Argo tells John that what he needs is a nap. But this hum! In the head! Chiana says there's something in his head, not actually a brain, and John reminds us how Einstein told him he can locate places he's been before. "It's like a homing beacon," John says. Only the opposite, right? Chiana says he "can't go with feck-face," because he'll mess with John, and then betray him. Only she doesn't say "mess," she says "screw." Scorpius, who was already lurking in the bay as they entered, goes BOO! by way of chiding Chiana for her lack of trust in him. Brave little Chiana hounds Scorpius as they head to the *Farscape 1*, demanding to know what's going on and why he's accompanying John into the crazy wormhole dimensions. Scorpius will only say that they have an agreement, and that the details are confidential. And creepy! Also really, really wrong! D'Argo begs John not to do it, simply and sincerely, and John levels with them. "Guys, I know what I'm doing is stupid, but it's out of my hands. I gotta save Aeryn, you know that. Just get us close to the wormhole. If we don't come back..." Chiana's staring at him. "Right." He turns back to the module, time goes crazy on the screen.

Aeryn's woozy as the Sebacean bitch-nurse comes in. "Feeling better?" Aeryn updates her on how she was in [critical heat delirium](#), just so we know that this is just awful and just so we know that John is coming. Nurse is still struck by this: "Almost couldn't get your temperature down in time. I thought Peacekeepers were supposed to be battle-strengthened? Why did his heat probe almost kill you?" She circles, watching. Aeryn swallows painfully and says she's just tired. She begs the nurse to go away. The nurse decides on Good Cop instead: "Listen, that fennik will kill you unless you give him a reason not to, I've seen it happen. You'll be just another D.I.T. 'Died In Transit.'" She acts all put-upon, like, "Sorry for trying to save your ungrateful ass for more torture! Gah!" Aeryn asks Nurse if -- given that she's really Sebacean -- it makes

it easier to let other people do the dirty work, like the fennik Scarran, while she's a cowardly collaborator.

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Nurse continues to circle, paraphrasing John from last week's tag: "Listen, I've heard all that dren before. Usually from people like you, chained in a cell. Look at me: I'm not. You know why? Because I figured out a long time ago: Peacekeepers, Scarrans...what difference does it matter who rules? It won't be me, all I'm going to do is survive. I suggest you should do the same."

Here's John's speech from last week: "You set me up, not that I care. I don't care 'bout much. War. Death. Wormholes: I don't care about the things you care about. Peacekeepers rule the Scarrans; Scarrans rule the Peacekeepers...let them rule together. Put your ass in a cage. I care about one thing. One. God have mercy on my soul." You tell me who the good guy is, here.

Aeryn looks at the Nurse. "I'll tell Captain Jenek you're ready for another interrogation." Ha, Jenek the fennik. Let's just laugh and have fun. The Nurse and John both know the truth: all that matters is survival. Specifically, in these two speeches, *Aeryn's* survival. Who's the good guy? Aeryn. She's the only one that wouldn't make that choice. Ironically enough. Which is not to say that she's not gonna get pretty hairy tonight either. Truth, justice, and the American way are getting a beating this week. Nurse leaves; Aeryn shudders and tries to get her breathing under control.

"Pilot, thank *Moya* for us and stay well clear. You guys have come far enough." Pilot comms that *Moya's* telling him the wormhole is destabilizing. John nods grimly: "Yeah, it's not too good. Grasshopper, you still up for this?" Scorpius sits behind John, in the Aeryn seat: "I was just musing: if you miss your intended target, we could change the future. Or the past. Create a world devoid of Peacekeepers...and Scarrans. Would you like that, John?" It's not a question so much as a dare: do you love me yet? John just closes his eyes, headachy, and says, "Clear the mechanism." He does. "Focus." He does. He says goodbye; Chiana comms him some luck, turns to stare at D'Argo, worried, crawling out of her skin.

"Left. Left again. No, damn. Right!" The module, and thus the camera, whirl wildly throughout the entire episode. Don't watch it if you get sick, it's worse than *Blair Witch*. Which I guess is the point. Scorpius snorts, "I thought you knew where you were going," but John tells him to shut up. "I'm trying to concentrate. Left. Up there. That should be it." They shoot out of the wormhole into normal space. "Where exactly is here?" The only *Moya* sadder (scarier) than the real one.

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Captain Jenek and Nurse pedeconference on the Scarran Dreadnaught. "The signal from her bioloid stopped before our Dreadnaught could locate their Leviathan," Jenek worries. The Nurse wonders how they figured out about the fake Aeryn so quickly; Jenek says he'll find out from Aeryn. He is beautiful. I love Scarrans. The bourgeois ones, not the longnecks. Those are gross-looking. Nurse brings up Aeryn's weird susceptibility to the heat breath, once again, in case you didn't know that's the gun on the mantle, and Jenek's like, "Enough with the heat breath. *I don't care if she dies*, duh." Nurse asks for an hour to figure it out. "I have an idea how she still might be useful to us." I think there's kindness in this, but who knows. Captain Jenek gives her

an hour. She enters Aeryn's cell and dopes her up. Aeryn says she's in no need of sleeping aids, and Nurse just calls it "Orders." Aeryn begs her not to touch her and struggles, Nurse backhands her and gives her the dope. Only it's not in the arm, it's in her abdomen. And it's not going in, it's pulling stuff out. It's an amnio. The jig is up; Nurse would be good to have around if she weren't so bad to have around. Aeryn figures it out and looks accusingly up at her: "What have you done?"

More horrible spinning. John is futzing with the module; some kind of problem with the "fluid drives." They work together, Scorpius flipping switches: "Irony, wouldn't it be? If we were to die here together?" Not really. In either sense of the word. John calls them "a regular Romeo and Juliet," which is also...not that different from reality. The spinning reminds him of mescal: "You got somethin' like mescal? Drink the drink, eat the worm? I can see you eatin' a whole *plateful* of worms." Heh. He reconsiders; like I'm so sure Scorpius could handle hallucinogens. "Just for the record. If you'd gotten the information and were able to control wormholes, what would you have done with it?" Scorpius "jokes": "Taken over as much of the Universe as possible, found your home planet, and destroyed it." John's like, "Party foul!" and Scorpius admits it's not funny. "No, I would use the wormholes as a deterrent against any future Scarran attack." As he's said like a million times before. They strap themselves in and soon enough they're back in the wormhole complex. "Left. Again. Gotta go." They twist and turn and explode out into space again. A Leviathan hangs before them in the sky. "Is that the *Moya* we're looking for?" "Better be! My head's ringing like a fire-bell."

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Aeryn is still strapped in the chair, heat breath in her face. "How did you know we planned to kidnap Grayza?" She insists that it was an accident, which it was. Her arms jerk and she gasps and cries. Nurse hurries in and tells Jenek to stop immediately. "The Sebacean is dissembling." Nurse gets intense: "No! I know why she's reacting like this." She tells him to stop and he tells her to fuck off. "She is with child," Nurse whispers. Jenek stops with the heat and turns to her. "Scarran heat probe will kill a pregnant Sebacean," she reminds him. Jenek gets shifty and clever: "She was close to Crichton, was she not?" Indeed. Once upon a time.

Sikozu runs along behind D'Argo, bitching at him. They are having wormholer's remorse, agreeing that maybe this was a bad idea. "Aeryn is dead," says D'Argo. "I know Scarrans," says Sikozu. She follows him onto Command, where he says definitively that they're not going anywhere. "Grayza knows the location of this wormhole," Sikozu reminds him; he is impassive. "D'Argo!" He ignores her. "She put the Skreeth on *Moya* when we were last here. Please..." Rygel counsels him to listen. "Grayza knows Crichton used this wormhole as a path to get back to Earth. She knows he'll come back here." D'Argo flips out on him: "And I thought you were finally convinced Crichton's wormholes would get you home." Rygel sighs; not the point. D'Argo says they're staying for an hour. "Pilot! Get *Moya* to do a long-point, all-range scan. I don't care if it's a gas cloud or an asteroid field, I want to know the microt she senses something."

Things turn into *Jacob's Ladder* as a barely conscious Aeryn is wheeled down a corridor with banks of lights in the ceiling. Captain Jenek: "Can you retrieve incumbent knowledge from fetal DNA?" Which is: lame, except for how wormholes aren't science, they're art. Except for how it was his father the Ancient who gave them to

him. Except for how this is about bodies, not minds. "Not here, but the med labs on Katratzi might be able to," says the Nurse by Aeryn's side. "What have you done?" Aeryn struggles to alertness; the Nurse hisses at her: "I've saved your life." Captain Jenek, very excited: "You realize what this could mean? If this is Crichton's child, we could learn all he knows about wormholes from this fetal DNA." The Nurse is like, "Um, *this just in!*" Aeryn begins to scream.

Commercial and now Aeryn's in a spiky *House On Haunted Hill* kind of ugly Scarran design-sense chair: arms cruciform in cages of curved spikes, legs straight out. She's not alone, in the sense that there are other prisoners in other chairs; they've changed her outfit for her as well. "Djancaz-bru, I'm going to say this again because I don't think you heard me last time. Just get a message to him. Let him know where I am, so he can find me." Maybe she did. I don't guess it matters. Another prisoner, female, with slightly more neck than [Jeffrey Sebelia](#), sniffs. "I didn't think Peacekeepers *had* gods. I thought they believed in the Warrior Code: *Battle and Die* and all that dren." Aeryn, startled, looks around at her; she's kind of lizardy with an Aussie face. Another prisoner speaks: "Is there a Peacekeeper here? Can she help us?" The neck lady, Morrock, sniffs again: "She can't even help *herself*. She's *praying*."

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Nurse appears. "Whose child is it? Captain Jenek will force it from you. He believes that if he can find the human's child, the Scarrans will reward him. Right now, he's dreaming of palaces and virgins." Nice. Aeryn says she's happy for him. "I warn you: he won't kill you. But unless you tell him what he wants, he'll make you wish you were dead." Aeryn breathes out, slow: "I have dozens of embryos inside me. I recreated with...so many people." Nurse knows better. "No. Just one." Aeryn makes a joke so meta it'll do your dishes for you: "No, really. 'PK Trell Girl,' that's what they used to call me." Nurse warns her to talk to the others, the women prisoners: "They'll tell you. We can keep you drugged and asleep, or we can make things...hard and ugly. Worse than you can imagine." The lights dim as she leaves. Aeryn shakes.

Time is crazy on weirdo *Moya*: ripples and shakes and double-vision. "Every wormhole has millions of exits to different times and places, which are complete and unending," John explains. "So in this reality everyone on *Moya* has become someone they weren't before?" John compares it to putting them into a blender, but there's more to it than that. "Why?" Because it's sad! "With these wormholes, anything is possible. Somewhere the Cubs are winning the World Series. Don't ask." The ship shakes: "Better hurry. We got an arn before Crais overruns this place and slaughters everybody." In the galley, Stark (played by Sikozu) is making something; Rygel (played by Noranti) is shoving food into his mouth. Scorpius is like, "The fuck?" John nods. "It's a weird universe. I didn't invent it." You'd be surprised.

Morrock explains what this room is about, where they've got Aeryn now. "Genetic incubation. They find something interesting about us, see if they can produce an offspring they can use. They've bred me six times; three of them died before term. Three of them...I don't know where they are." So what's interesting about Morrock? "The organic food on my planet grows a metal skin. I can dissolve it with saliva." But not the spikes around their arms, of course: "Only thin metal." Morrock explains that's why the breeding: "To see if the little gnink in here can destroy weapons grade metal." Aeryn's suspicious, because that's how she rolls: "And you just happen to be awake

right now to talk to me?" Nope, she palms -- even though their arms are stretched out and locked in; I assume they unlock their hands for meals -- the sleeping pills. She shows her, in her palm. "I've saved up enough so I can kill myself whenever I want," she whispers; Aeryn smiles sadly and turns away. "You don't believe a word I'm saying. You think I'm working for that bitch nurse! They don't need me to control you. You can't beat them. They travel us around on felled-up freighters like this and no one ever knows exactly where we are." Tears run down Aeryn's face. "No one can save us, and we can't escape. I know. I've tried for cycles...then I gave up. But I see you still think someone's coming." Close-up on Aeryn thinking, "Do you do birthday parties?" "You should talk to me. In here, talk's all you've got." Also suicide. Aeryn looks away, working her injured jaw. Staring up.

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Think about Sikoze, and think about Stark. Both of them in love with Scorpius. (Both of them, in certain extremities, confusing his pain with pleasure, and vice versa.) Both of them members of a slave race. Both of them a seemingly unending source of new powers and abilities, both touched by magic. Her lizard resurrections, limbs growing back; his soul never allowed to rest, coming back again and again. Both of them, at one point or another, just a bioloid (spoiler!) -- a fake image. Both of them have secret faces you barely ever get to see. Like Aeryn. Both of them symbolic of John's ambiguous relationship with Scorpius: *Cider House Rules* and *Leaving Las Vegas*, two different paths that wormhole complex could go. Like Aeryn. Stark telling John to submit to Scorpius's burning teachings; Sikoze demonstrating the sometimes real worth of Scorpius's self-serving agenda. Both of them alone. Both of them, in their way, illustrative of Scorpius's hard wisdom, the dance John's only just begun to dance, in blood and milk. Both of them submissive to the needs of others, in their way. Both of them dedicated to the service of something higher. Both of them appearing at moments of John's greatest madness; both of them beautiful.

John drags beautiful Stark down a corridor by his arm; she's never seemed so small.

"I heard you say it! *Katratzi!*" He insists he doesn't know; John slams him into the table, out of control. "She said it! She said it when Chiana was killed." Stark jumps: "Chiana's dead?" (He always loved Aeryn; she has a secret fondness for Chiana.) John shakes his head; it's complicated: "No, no, no, no. Chiana's not dead." Scorpius offers to take over the interrogation; everybody tells him to fuck off. "Does Zhaan know..." Stark begins, and John tells her to shut up. "I heard you say a Scarran word. *Katra...*" He's losing language; Scorpius compensates: "*Katratzi.*" Stark again demurs. "You said it when you were crossing someone over. When you were in that trance state." Stark explains that he never has recollections when he's not in the stykera state. She shakes her head. Plugging into Heaven doesn't translate down here. But how could you speak in the Scarran tongue?" asks Scorpius, and Stark pulls away. "Once, I...I must have crossed over a Scarran." (There's a clue in that stammer there, something we won't know for a long time, about Sikoze: this Stark can't cross over anyone she doesn't love.) "They tell me things." He backs into a barrel and grabs hold of it. "Only when I'm in the trance does the knowledge come flooding back to me." It's art, not science. This is John's realm. Time goes crazy. Scorpius heads out: "Keep him here. I'll be right back." Oh balls.

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Captain Jenek and the Nurse stand over Aeryn in a *Marathon Man* place. The Nurse shows Jenek a hologram of the Sebacean reproductive process. "Watch. The Sebacean egg is fertilized. It splits with life. It splits again, then stops." The projection freezes. But how? "The ovum secretes a fluid that keeps the pregnancy in stasis, literally freezes the explosion of life. She can store this proto-fetus for up to seven cycles before triggering gestation." Nurse picks up a large, scary injection gun with truth serum in it. If you hate needles, man is this not the show for you. "Don't use that, I won't lie to you. I'll just tell you what you want to know." The Nurse looks down on her sharply, smooth: "You wouldn't lie to me?" Aeryn shakes her head; Nurse injects her. It's pretty ugly. Aeryn gasps and lies back. "Yes, of course I'd lie to you, you stupid bitch." Captain Jenek growls at her. "Aeryn," Nurse says, almost whispering, "whose child is inside you?" This actress is really good, and I can see why they'd bring her back for *Peacekeeper Wars*, but it does make it hard to buy her as the head of a peaceful race after seeing her cruelty and hidden kindness here. You're distrustful when you shouldn't be. "Yours," Aeryn harshes out. "Whose child?" She says she doesn't know; Jenek demands to know if it's Crichton's. Aeryn stammers. "I don't know." She gasps under the weight of lies and pain and torture. She's so strong. "I don't...there was another man."

Aeryn kneels behind PK Sex Bomb [Velorek](#) in negative, rubbing his shoulders, kissing him. "Velorek." They make love. "This Velorek," Jenek asks. "Where is he now?" He's dead, she says; we're still in the realm of the known. "How did he die?" She betrayed him to High Command, and he was executed. All the crimes, coming back. It's just a symptom of the plot but it's also the point. "The man who conceived your child?" Jenek asks, since he doesn't know that almost every person on *Moya* has, at one point, killed a lover. Usually in the bedroom. Jenek thinks she's lying and orders Nurse to give her more serum. "Mm. I'm not lying. I'm just not a very nice..." She groans and clenches as Nurse injects her with more honesty. She's beginning to cry. You always have to go back to the beginning, and it's always the worst part. Being big enough to swallow your own evil. "This Velorek, is he the father of your child?" She closes her eyes, unable to lie, sickened by her own weakness: "No." She passes out, and the Nurse admits she can't wake Aeryn up until the serum wears down. He heat-breaths her, out of frustration, and they have a little psychic conversation where he confirms that she's not working with Aeryn. He turns to Morrock: "What about hers? How is her embryo coming along?" The initial DNA scan shows no enhanced ability in the embryo; Jenek aborts the child as Aeryn watches, terrified and on the edge of consciousness. How much of this is theatre? Morrock screams. "Unless I get answers that please me," Jenek says, "you will be next." Aeryn looks up at him. Her eyes are dry.

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Think about Noranti, and think about Rygel. Both of them constantly barfing, shitting, spitting, farting, pissing. Both of them intimately connected to *Moya* in ways no one else will ever understand. Both of them came onboard in moments of John's greatest confusion, which is what he's feeling now. Both of them offered him a deal that he should never take, in those few moments. Both of them the secrets that Zhaan could never handle: that the universe contains both good and evil, both selfless and selfish. Both of whom John loves in a secret way he can't explain. Both of them connected to

his body, not his mind. Both of them intimately tied up with Aeryn: Rygel has become a proponent of their love; Noranti has championed and fought it, by turns. Both of them can turn on a dime. Both of them too innocent for Scorpius to ever see the point in them. Both of them negotiators, diplomats; both of them able to do this because they don't see the division between "good aliens" and "bad aliens." Rygel because everyone's an alien, because he's enthroned in his regality; Noranti because *no one* is an alien, but nobody believes her when she says it. Both of them archetypal tricksters: Grandmother Spider with her nighttime secrets and dreams that come true; Coyote with a fat belly and a bottle of whiskey. Both tied to Chiana through bonds of selfishness and physicality, and thus to John's innocence; both of them beautiful. "Let go of me!" Rygel demands. "Who are you?" None of them know Scorpius, on this *Moya*. To their detriment. Scorpius shoves Rygel into the room; he sees John and begs him to explain what's happening. "Dominar," Scorpius whispers, "quiet." He pushes her down, the Noranti that Rygel could be. Stark watches, alarmed. Only Sikozy has the regal bearing of our Dominar; they've always had ruinous pride in common. Nobody wants to watch Rygel fall. "Crichton, who is this talk?" Rygel says, indicating Scorpius. He ignores her and turns to Stark: "Now. You can channel past journeys when you cross a soul over?" She nods and Scorpius pulls Winona from John's holster in one smooth movement. He shoots Rygel in the chest: the most innocent and the most disgusting among them. The Rygel that Noranti could be -- sharp mind, sharp teeth -- falls to the floor. Stark screams like he couldn't see this coming. John grabs Scorpius, appalled. "Now cross her over," Scorpius orders, and Stark continues to scream, head in hands, going crazy. "You cannot just shoot people!" John shrieks, like he didn't see this coming. ("All I did was rub this lamp! Why are you granting me wishes?")

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"They'll be dead in an arm," Scorpius shrugs, eyes on the clock. "You said so yourself. We have no time to negotiate. Now," he says sharply, turning to Stark with the gun. "Cross. Her. Over. " John grabs for his gun arm as Stark insists she can't. "I have to love the soul! I have to care about where it goes, to cross it over!" John lunges for her. "What do you mean, *love the soul*? You never had to love the soul before." Stark cocks his head at John. "I've *always* had to love the soul." Different Stark, different rules, John realizes. But that's not it: it's another Inanna story. Take out the holy body, and what's left? All the things you thought mattered. John's down a higher self and a body that delights, in one package. He abuses his paths to Scorpius and to truth; they abuse them together. This won't end until they're all dead, and he already knew that. They already were. The second he drank that poison milk, he gave it all up. "So what happens if you don't love the soul? You won't cross it over?" Not won't, but can't. "When they die, they just go. Nothing happens." John stares from Stark to the holy corpse, and over at the unholy one. Whoops, he grits at Scorpius, and walks off. Aeryn listens to Morrock crying, finally asks if she's in pain. "What do you care? I'm just a Scarran spy, and you're a Peacekeeper." Aeryn declares herself: "No, I'm not a Peacekeeper." Not even a little. Morrock sighs: "That's the third one they've terminated. I saw it on the scan, it must have been malformed, or... The three that survived, they were beautiful. Healthy." Aeryn fact-checks: "And you've had six pregnancies?" They'll wait a while, Morrock says, and then fertilize her again. Take out

the holy body, and what's left? Nothing at all. Rapists go to hell because they twist what God made. "...Unless I've got the guts to..." She closed her eyes and swallows. "Have you ever had a child?" No. "Never?" Aeryn explains: "Well, soldiers seldom do, unless they're placed on a breeding roster. In any case, it's not the same as being a mother, is it? That's why I vowed I'd never have one that way." In their love of their child, their missteps and horrors, Talyn and Xhalax gave her this at least: her holy body. "And now, protecting this child will probably end my life." Morrock whispers blasphemy: "There is another way to make sure they never get it. I've hoarded enough sleep pills for the both of us. But I've never been brave enough to end it myself." She cries and shakes her head: "Coward." Aeryn asks her name and pretends to calm: "Well, Morrock. When someone comes to get me, they can save you too." The only thing a prisoner can do is hope.

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You know the Prisoner's Dilemma? It's also known as "Daring Aeryn to Love Him," and it goes like this. Orwell puts you in Room 101 and says John's next door and he's already sold you out -- that he never loved you and he's always been a spy, a love terrorist, a PK Trelk Boy -- or he's let you down -- just as useless as you thought. So the possibilities are as follows: 1) You keep the faith, assuming they're lying. 2) You sell him out, and he goes down innocent. 3) You stay true, and he sells you out. 4) Or you turn on each other. Those are the possibilities. I lie, you lie, we both lie, we both tell the truth. My side, your side, in a very real sense. And the conventional wisdom is that you don't do this thing, you don't make the deal with the devil, because there's a 25 percent chance that you'll save each other. Which are not great odds, but when the whole universe is against you, hope is actually the smartest alternative. Not starry-eyed romance but the cold facts: 1) Everybody wins. 2) You're fucked. 3) You're fucked. 4) You're fucked. Might as well choose hope. You choose John. Or, if you're John, an unthinkable alternative that contains hope and hatred in equal amounts. Harvey's Lovely Daughter.

Scorpius follows John down the corridor as time goes nuts: "Who does Stark love?" John insists again that "You cannot just shoot people!" but he's playing a role: John Crichton, Nice Guy. He knows damn well why he brought Scorpius with him. He gave in before the episode started. "I find your priorities odd," Scorpius hisses. "We are in a hurry and these deformities are preordained to die soon. *Who does Stark love?*" In order: God, Zhaan, Scorpius, John...and Aeryn. Fuck. John stares around at an unfamiliar part of *Moya* he's never seen before (I wondered if maybe *Moya* weren't blundered too: with Talyn, maybe). "Just because you do not have the resolution," Scorpius begins, and John cuts him off, turning back past Scorpius: "I got *more than enough* 'resolution' the last time I was here. And sometimes, Scorpy, I do not like the way you do things!" But that doesn't stop you rubbing the lamp, does it, when the stakes are high enough. Scorpius growls softly and follows John back.

Command, D'Argo and Sikozu watching as the wormhole dances. Pilot reports that he's been hitting John's comms every half-minute, and gotten nothing. Rygel worries whether the module will even be able to make reentry through the tormented wormhole. Pilot: "I don't know. *Moya's* scans indicate the wormhole's stability has decreased another twelve percent." Sikozu hounds D'Argo again: "You know what we should do." He tells her to back off; she won't. "Grayza is no fool. We will die if we stay

here much longer." D'Argo fairly spits with the attempt to explain the family stuff: "I'm not leaving Crichton! We're giving him another chance." How much longer? He shouts at her that he doesn't know; Chiana tells her slowly, scarily, "Back. Off. Psycho." Sikozy decides to put it to a vote: "We wake up Noranti and the six of us vote." Captain Ka D'Argo shakes his head, wearily. "Crichton is safe!" she shouts. The mathematical approach; the Prisoner's Dilemma. We'll see all sides before it's done. "But we will die, if Grayza finds us here! Majority rules." D'Argo informs her that it doesn't, actually. Not quite yet. "I'm the Captain. I'm not willing to make that decision." Sikozy breathes, frustrated and scared; Pilot tells him he might have to. "*Moya's* long range scan has just picked up another vessel heading this way." Military? Can't tell yet. D'Argo and Sikozy hurry to their consoles.

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"Any match on the embryo DNA?" Nurse shakes her head at Jenek: "It's a pattern the memory banks have never catalogued, so it *could* be half human...we have no sample of Crichton's DNA." Aeryn looks up at them, ready to lie some more. Or maybe to tell the truth; we still don't know. "If I tell you?" The Nurse assures her that her pain will end; Aeryn tells another story. "When I was off *Moya*, I had another job..."

Aeryn in a tight dress, laughing with some men; the images are black and white and blippy. "Assassinations, subversion. Whatever I was ordered to do." She shoots the laughing men; blood shoots everywhere. There's triumph in her face, cold though it is. I think we're still in the realm of the known. "There was a man named Lechna." And he is *wicked hot*. Aeryn pulls the finest tail, I swear. Aeryn and Lechna meet before a shining, round window, smiling, and begin to kiss. "He was my contact. Found me all my assignments. But he was also my lover...I have tried to suppress it until now to protect him." She weeps in the chair. "But I don't want the drugs anymore. It is most likely his conception." Jenek demands to know where Lechna was from. "He's from a place called Vendrall. It's a small planet off most charts." True love never dies, of course, and we all know it's John's baby. Not that the show wouldn't slap you with this particular bass just for fun, just to hurt you more, but come on. It's John's baby. For the moment we're just as lost as Nurse, as Captain Jenek. Just as confused as D'Argo. As John. Jenek knows the planet, it's in the Callus Nebula; Nurse resolves to cross-check samples from the Nebula to double-check. Aeryn watches.

Think about Aeryn, and think about Chiana. Both of them beautiful. Both of them love, and have loved, John Crichton. On every level that exists, they have loved him. He drew them out of their cages, so many times, to save himself by saving them. Both of them allowed him to play the role of teacher, in their time. Aeryn became more, broke with the Peacekeepers, held him as he died, cried his name as she went down; later, he drew her out of her pain and self-destruction and held her, in tears. Chiana became more, learning to trust and learning to love; later, he drew her out of fear and rage from both sides of time, and she could be held again. Aeryn was the only person alive who knew the pain of being Sebacean and not-Sebacean at once -- who knows the pain of being human and not-human, of having Earth bite the hand that offers hope. Chiana's the only one who knows what happens when they take away your holy body. The three of them are united too in the false starts and frustration of taking physical instinct and making it intellectual fact, that old field exercise: of taking science and making it art. Aeryn's become more; like John, Chiana is learning to manipulate time

and space. It's magic, and the three of them are the only ones who know it. They are innocence and they are hope, and unending love. Everything good about the universe. And watch what happens. Watch what he's prepared to do.

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John and Scorpius have the Aeryn that Chiana could be bound, Chiana played by Aeryn, with a gag in her mouth, and they are shoving her down a hallway. John continues to lie to himself and Scorpius and anyone nearby: "We're gonna do this my way with Stark. Not yours!" Too late. Scorpius chides him -- "You haven't got the resolution to do what's necessary." -- and John tells him to stop with that already.

Think about D'Argo, think about Jool. John's healthy masculinity, undergone so many undercuts and architectural adjustments he's not even the man he was. John's healthy love of science, learning; his holy rage when science is turned into violence. He's not the man he was. Both connected to Chiana, and thus John's innocence, but more than that: D'Argo and Jool were friends, intimate ones. Eventually or almost lovers. They're the first pairing that has a romantic relationship in their history. They are the mirror image of Harvey's Lovely Daughter: a funny androgyny, but one that is pure through and through. Both of them love John, too, in particular ways that words cannot adequately describe. They're also the only ones that know how to have fun, besides Chiana, whose kind of fun is sort of scary most of the time. The next one's really awful, of course; this one's almost worse. They are both warriors and poets; the two diverging paths John's wormhole travel has demanded he become. They are the more that John can be. And watch what he's prepared to do.

Jool (played by D'Argo) surprises them, demanding to know -- arms akimbo -- what the hell they're doing with Chiana, who whimpers softly behind her gag. "Jool, just let us pass." She shakes her head: "What. Are you doing. With Pip?" They both loved Chiana but there's a clue here, something about John: he's the only one that really calls her that. This is a fairytale. Scorpius whispers, "Shoot him!" John calls Jool a *she*, and Scorpius gives him another clue on how to survive this: "Shoot *it*!" It's a nod to the gender-blending, sure, but it's also something PKs have been doing forever. "It." John whispers, pleading with Scorpius to let him handle it; Jool continues to make his demands. She finally fires her gun into the ceiling. There's a firefight, as Scorpius continues to hiss ("Shoot it!") and John continues to avoid the fact that he's the one orchestrating all of this. Every single moment of this episode, John co-signs. He thinks he can get out of this without killing her? He's not paying attention. John finally clips Jool in the side and she goes down. It's cruel, in a way, and Scorpius agrees, in a way. "Satisfied?" "No. I don't like the way you do things either. Very messy." Scorpius and Pip proceed down the hall; John follows, after considering the body. His honor and his science, gone.

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Aeryn begs her to stop, as the Nurse injects her again. It's an Inanna story for Aeryn, too. Digging down below the lies and the stories we tell about ourselves; taking them off like clothing. Retching with pain as the skin and layers come off, like Aslan in the moonlight. The only story that means anything at all. "You lied!" Aeryn cries out, falls back. "We found record of Vendrall DNA. Your embryo is not the product of one of Vendrall's sons." Jenek paces around Aeryn on the table. "Well, Lechna lied to me!" *There is no Lechna.* "There is Lechna!" Morrock shouts to leave her alone, and is

ignored. How much of this is theatre? They've doubled the strength of the serum; Aeryn begs for mercy. She weeps. "Stop it!" screams Morrock. "She's telling the truth! You'll kill the child!" Jenek leans over her: "Is John Crichton the father of your child?" She sobs, her own flesh anathema, as she tells a truth we've never heard (or does she), and your stomach turns over watching her do it, and hearing her say it. It's a prayer to Djancaz-bru.

"I've already told you, it's Lechna's. Not Crichton's. How many times do I have to tell you? I knew Lechna before I went onto *Moya*. I was on *Moya* to watch Crichton. As soon as I left, I went straight back to Lechna." Her sobs shake her body. "I have never, ever loved John Crichton. I've never loved him." The false image -- the thing you never wanted her to say, because it's all too possible. Twenty-five percent is a very small number.

"You lie. Tell the truth." When Aeryn left *Moya*, she laughed with a man. She was so sophisticated, so worldly. So unlike the coltish tomboy we know. A man in many necklaces sits on a stool, laughing. More men laugh. She shoots the laughing men, bashes one in the face with her gun, snapping another's neck. Beating in one laughing man's face with her elbow. She leaves the dead men and approaches Lechna. PK Trell Girl. "Ter...terminal soldiers..." Lechna smiles up at her from his seat. "Lechna..." Lechna and Aeryn kiss, the camera whirling around them. "I forgot all about Crichton," Aeryn weeps, to herself. "It was..." Aeryn and Lechna embrace. "I completely forgot about Crichton. I forgot all about him." Self-hatred but no pity in her voice. She shakes, and weeps. Aeryn and Lechna laugh, and kiss. So much easier this way. How much of this is theatre? How good is she? How *bad* is she? Are we back in the realm of the known? Will we ever know for sure? She lies on the table, weeping with exhaustion after working so hard to tell this story.

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Pilot informs D'Argo, finally, that the approaching vessel is a Command Carrier." Sikozy's like, Fuckin' see? "We've done all Crichton could ask of us. We've stayed here too long. We must starburst now." Chiana remembers in a flash the signature converter they bought from Rekka. "Like we did before." Rygel points out that this is fahrbot, considering that it'll turn *Moya* into a Scarran freighter, which the PKs would of course attack. "We won't let them get that close," she says. "Look, if they long-range scan us, they'll move off, because we're not *Moya*. It's worth a shot." (But also, how about this? *THEY HAVE SEVERAL COCKADOODIE SIGNATURE OPTIONS, OF WHICH PILOT IS DEMONSTRABLY AWARE.*) D'Argo nods about that idea, and Pilot gives him 30 seconds to decide. D'Argo agrees to the vote: "Do we starburst, or do we initiate engine signature change?" My side, your side: Sikozy and Rygel vote to starburst, Chiana votes to stay; Pilot hesitantly says that he and *Moya* -- of course -- both vote to stay. Sikozy and Rygel close their eyes.

"Initiate the signature change," D'Argo orders. What do you do when you can't get out? Turn into something else: change shape. Ask Aeryn, who's shape-shifting like a motherfucker right now. The thing that makes you awesome is the thing that makes you suck, but what the show's smart enough to say -- and I never am -- is that the opposite is just as true.

Case in point: Scorpius, who asks John if, given the differences they keep finding on weirdo *Moya*, if this will even work. John nods: "It's what happened before. Pip got

killed, Stark channeled the Scarran while he was crossing her over." Not Aeryn, not even Chiana: Pip. Just a letter or two from it. My side, your side. Don't forgive him for this episode; he wouldn't want you to. Chiana and Stark are tied to some crates near the corpse of Rygel. "You or me?" Scorpius asks. No difference. John nods to himself and walks slowly towards them. "I'll do it."

This is the Chiana that Aeryn could be: everything on the surface. Nowhere to hide when things go south. If you're a basket case all the time, it's a strength: there's nowhere else to go. No way to hide your love, your desire. Nowhere for your pride to stash your joy. She is open, and she is beautiful. And she is terrified. "Hey, Crichton, untie me? You know...I know, I...always tie up people I like," she says, cracking a joke. Looking down at her shaking hands. Stark shakes her head, quivering all over, close to breaking. "If you kill her, I won't help you. I won't cross her over." John crouches and looks into their strange, lovely faces. "Yes you will." Chiana's confused. "What is he talking about? *What is he talking about?*" Stark or John. What is he talking about? What are they talking about. Stark looks at Chiana, then at the floor. John tries reason: "Look, I know this doesn't make any sense, but...you're gonna die in half an arm, and there's nothing I can do to stop that." (He takes something glorious, this blended, ascended beauty, and makes of it a broken mockery. He takes pain and he adds pain and fear, and all the while he's saying, "This is necessary. This is necessary *for me*." Not even the fucking Peacekeepers.) Chiana jerks: "What? What do you mean?" Stark stares at him; Chiana declares she's not going to die. "Yes, you are," he says, and stands up, leaving them there on the floor. His capacity for love and his capacity for innocence, even after being broken and used: the truth of the holy body, that Innocence and Experience aren't just a binary, they're a road. From Innocence to Experience, and on into Grace. The place you can't remember heading when you think you've lost everything. Redemption. Chiana stares at the place where he was, crouched. But John's already gone.

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"Listen, Crichton," she says, her gamine grin perfection. "Are you in some kind of trouble? Who is this feck, is he making you do this? If you untie me, I can help you." She trembles. "I always do." She always does. They always do. They pull him back across when he's forgotten how far he's already gone. *He pulls Winona on her*. This is perversion. She gasps; Stark stares; Scorpius "helps." "It is not Aeryn," he whispers, almost comfortingly. "Looks a lot like her," John bites out. Chiana smiles, beautifully innocent, scared to death. "Okay, the joke's over. Okay? I...I was stupid to take it this seriously, because...it's a joke. Right? You have to stop. Because you can't kill me. You...you *can't*." He already did. John stares down his pistol into her face. Lover. Sister. Soulmate. Aeryn with purity; Chiana with maturity. Something precious. She shakes her head, lost control, and sniffs loudly. In the silence and the staring, his voice finally breaks. "No. No, I can't." The wall he always hits. He lowers the pistol, Chiana sighs.

"I can," says Scorpius. Of course. One smooth move and he takes her away from John. Again. Always and again. She begins to die. John and Stark scream for her; Scorpius points. "Now cross her over."

Think about John, think about Scorpius. Come to the necessary conclusions. John can't.

John punches Scorpius, knocking him backwards. The other wall he always hits. A tear runs down his face. Everybody unmoving; things moving faster than ever. Chiana's eyes widen as her death comes closer; Stark touches her face. Chiana looks up into John's beautiful face, then Stark's. Stark looks back at John, hatred in his eyes, and down at Chiana. Her eyes are closing. She's fading out.

Jenek and the Nurse look down at Aeryn, in a cage the size and shape of her own body. She gasps and gags. "Well, I don't know if it's Crichton's child," she spits.

Jenek's getting bored: "Frell with your drugs. They're not working." He aims heat at her womb. Nurse gasps. "You'll kill her!" She coughs; she's fading out. "Who is the father?" Aeryn chokes on drool and spit, foam at the corners.

"On Vendrall I met a man..." A man laughs loudly. Aeryn knees one, punches another; one with the elbow and one gets a head-butt; one of the fallen gets a kick in the gut. She approaches Lechna in his seat, grabbing him by the lapels. She hauls him to his feet and wraps her arms around him. The camera whirls. Down, down, down into darkness, and shedding lies and shadows like garments. The negative goes back to color; the negative image becomes a positive. Lechna becomes John Crichton.

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"There is no Lechna." Aeryn and John kiss. "I made him up." She gags; Aeryn and John smile sweetly, intimately, and kiss. "Just Crichton." At the bottom of the dark is the one truth they can't know. It's a betrayal but the erasure of a betrayal. True love; it might set you more at ease but it's vastly suckier than when she was lying. John and Aeryn, kissing, flooded with light. They smile, nuzzle noses. More intimate than kissing. "Only ever Crichton. Just him." she passes out; she stares into the distance. But John's gone.

Chiana lies on her side, eyes closed. Dying. Stark kneels at her side and chants, addressing Heaven. He reaches for his mask, and a golden light falls down, bathing Chiana's beautiful face. Scorpius has no time for religion: "Hasn't she said it yet?" John shushes him, listening to the chant. *Ausimaa kilay ti partree. Kilay ti partree...Katratzee...* John snaps up. "Katratzi. That's it, Stark. That's the name of the base." Stark attends to Chiana, light everywhere. Flooded with light. He sheds everything that makes him human, and arrives naked at the truth. "Seat of Scarran power," says Stark. Small. It's fortified. It's dangerous. Disguises its presence by...mirroring the orbit of one of the moons of Trilask." A name Scorpius recognizes; Stark continues to chant. *Trilask katratzee... Trilask katratzee...* Scorpius stands. "John, we can go." John looks into Chiana's face, touches Aeryn's hair. Scorpius sighs, exasperated. Stark finishes the stykera and looks at John, replaces his mask. Covers up the glory of his face. John looks at him, there are no words. He stands and walks out; Scorpius follows.

"Peacekeeper, wake up," Morrock touches Aeryn's arm, which is now free. Aeryn's confused; Morrock explains: "I watched the sequence codes." She takes Aeryn's hand tenderly, drops some pills into her palm; she shows Aeryn her own stockpile. Aeryn looks at her. "Are you sure?" asks Morrock. Aeryn looks at them in her hand, back up at Morrock. Nods. "The same time, then." They watch each other, and take their first pills. Morrock thanks her. "For doing this with me." Another pill. "I don't want to be their test stallik," says Aeryn. Morrock agrees. Third pills, fourth. "Anyway, what other choice do I have?" Aeryn asks her conversationally. "But your child. Aren't you

afraid?" Aeryn shakes her head. "I'd rather be dead than let them have it." Morrock asks quietly: "Is it really his? The man you loved?" Aeryn just sighs. "Does this really make you tired?" At first, then nothing. Aeryn smiles at her, close to tears. "You know, I had such incredible dreams for my child. It's impossible not to. How she was going to change the world. How she was going to look after me when I was old. They were foolish." (They were "[The Locket](#)", or as my friend Karen says: "Not even Aeryn's attempts at chick lit have a happy ending.")

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Morrock shakes her head kindly. "Not so foolish. I had the same dreams." Beat. "Is it his? Is it Crichton's child?" Aeryn gestures her closer. "Come here." She leans in; Aeryn caresses her face sadly. "Did you really have a child?" she whispers. Morrock cocks her head a bit. "I told you, I had six pregnancies." Aeryn nods, continues to stroke her. "Only three of them survived." Aeryn takes her by the throat. "I want the truth from you. I know that these pills won't kill me. I know that you're their spy." My side, your side. Sometimes 25 percent is just too small; and sometimes hope isn't enough. Sometimes your most awful thoughts are true. It's innocence gone. "So I want to know the truth: Have you even had *one* child?" Morrock gasps, squeezes tears out. "Have you even given birth to one child? The truth." Aeryn squeezes, tighter and tighter. "No," Morrock gasps. Aeryn snaps Morrock's neck with a loud crack. It's the sound of hope gone. It's the sound of John pointing a gun. "Good," Aeryn hisses, dropping dead Morrock to the floor. "Then I orphan no one." Her arms are free. She throws the pills across the room, spits them out furiously. As far away from her holy body as she can manage.

The module's leaking fire. John comms to Pilot, voice near dying: "We're back. Open the hangar doors. And we know where that Scarran base is." D'Argo comms that there's no time: "There's a Command Carrier on the way. We've got you in the docking web and we're about to starburst." [It's a Barn Swallow!](#) It's the exact same thing! You're safe; we've got you. It's okay, this close to home, to finally start crying. John ten-fours and D'Argo tells him to buckle in. As *Moya* begins to starburst, Scorpius sighs. "Why is nothing ever easy with you?" "Wish I knew." They starburst together. Captain Jenek: "We've set a course for Katratzi." Nurse informs Aeryn, back in her cell, that Katratzi's been informed of her condition. "There is a surgeon on hand." The cell door closes behind them as they leave.

The Prisoner's Dilemma is also known as "Pascal's Gamble." He was a mathematician and amateur philosopher, and his thought was that you can apply the logic of the Prisoner's Dilemma not only to love, like you do with the Turing Test every day of your life, but also to God, and it goes like this. They put you in Room 101 and says God's got you. You can sell Him out or you can be just as useless as he begs you not to be. So the possibilities are as follows: 1) You keep the faith, assuming they're lying. 2) You sell him out, and he loses his children one by one. 3) You stay true, and there's nothing there; you're all alone, making wishes on stars that don't care. 4) Or you rely on yourself, and since there's no God, you win because you were the only one playing. Those are the possibilities. And the conventional wisdom is that you do this thing, believe without proof, because the opportunity cost is so heavily leveraged. There's only a 25 percent chance that you'll save yourself, but the rewards are so much better on the other 75 percent, where God loves you, and you have the

option of loving Her back. When the whole universe is against you, hope is actually the smartest alternative. Not wash-eyed cult talk but the cold facts: 1) Everybody wins. 2) You're fucked. 3) You're fucked. 4) This game is stupid. The conventional wisdom I stress says it's easy: might as well choose God; might as well give in. Or, if you're Aeryn, an unthinkable alternative that contains hope and hatred in equal amounts. Harvey's Lovely Daughter.

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Aeryn looks up, accusing the sky. Up. My side.

"Now, Djancaz-bru. You haven't listened and you haven't helped. And I'm running out of time, so I'm gonna forget about you. I am now willing to make a deal with anyone -- with any-*thing* -- to save my child. Not because I can, but because I have to."

Aeryn bows her head. Down. Your side.

"Not 'because I can,'" not that arbitrary claim of an unfeeling Goddess who doesn't deserve the name, but because they're nothing left; not the harsh cold lying light of the kind of shitty God the Peacekeepers probably would worship.

Except they don't, do they? It's so much worse than this. The depth and breadth of the PK thing is hard to pick up on, because you have to work backwards from knowing her, but consider this. The Peacekeepers don't even have parents: just the Peacekeepers. They don't have religion: just the Peacekeepers. They don't have yards with grass, or skies with clouds, or puppies, or diaries, or television, or manicures or *Buff*y or Taco Bell. Just Command Carriers. She's not making the deal with the Devil that we think, this isn't some weird darkness where she's drinking blood and milk; she already did that. The extremity and horror of this final admission is so much worse than we can imagine. She's praying to the *Easter Bunny*. She's waiting for *Punky Brewster* to save her.

My side, your side. Aeryn bows her head. Alone.

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Moya docks at a Scarran way station; Sikozu's already there and probably Jenek's freighter, and John's dressed like a Peacekeeper. This whole trilogy has a lot going on, so there's a deft *in medias res* at the beginning of each episode: this one's about perfect, with a minimum of blah-blah, the second one requires you to be in the story immediately, and the last one is a crazy thing. It's cool, because the deal with episodic drama is always striking the balance, but the last, like, six episodes of the season are one headlong rampage, so they get to just drop us in the middle. Scorpius joins John, D'Argo, and Chi on Command and explains that Katratzi requires everybody to stop

for five days of inspection and quarantine, and that without clearance they get blowed up immediately.

Chiana rests her chin easily on John's shoulder and murmurs, the voice still of John's innocence and hope, that they'll find Aeryn no matter what. Scorpius tells Pilot to allow the station personnel to board *Moya*, and to monitor them, and Pilot says, "I understand, Captain Wentrask." Chiana asks what that's about, and Scorpius says they have to operate under the assumption that the comms are being intercepted; Chiana protests that their comms are secure, and Scorpius and John share a very quick, very weird little face-off moment as John says, for the sake of argument, "Let's just pretend they aren't." If you've been following this idea, that Scorpius himself is tied intimately to the comms aboard *Moya*, it's kind of queasy. I think Scorpius is similarly creeped out by the fact that John just tipped his hand as far as being aware of that fact. He can only admit to knowing this now that it doesn't matter, of course, but it's still so oogy with the frog/scorpion vibe.

A strange DRD with fins scoots around, past Scorpius, and a Charrid walks by with a rifle. A Kalish man who looks like a mad scientist approaches "Captain Wentrask" and introduces himself as "Dr. Trayso Talnell, Chief Medical Officer." Scorpius gets huffy about the inspection, and Talnell repeats that they have to be checked for "contraband and contaminants" before they can go on to Katratzi. Talnell pointedly notices John: "A Peacekeeper?" Scorpius congratulates Talnell on his perceptive abilities, and Talnell presses him for the backstory on how a high-placed Scarran official like Wentrask would have a PK buddy, and Scorpius tells him to eat a dick. "With due respect, Captain, you will either respond to my inquiries or you will be denied entry into Scarran space. Understood?" Scorpius gets closer and makes sure that he can hear him enunciating when he tells him again to eat a dick. "The Peacekeeper is a spy for the Scarrans. Also on board we have a Nebari and a Hynerian; they are spies as well. The Hierarchy will not look kindly on a Kalish who obstructs their delivery. Understood?" Talnell nods; John asks for a snack. Talnell directs them to the commons and warns him to lose his weapons. "Our sentinels are programmed to shoot and kill any armed visitors." John gives Winona to 1812 and asks him to keep her safe; 1812 bumbles. John looks unhappy, but of course he can't come into this with Winona in hand.

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Sikozu is sitting familiarly with a hottie Kalish in a gold jumpsuit, named Karohm. He looks like if the cast of *Supernatural* put on a little *Velvet Goldmine* and was also kind of lizardy. Everywhere you go on the station you can hear people talking outside your line of sight. As Sikozu waxes excitedly about his awesome job on the Scarran station, Chiana and Rygel chat about what a whore Sikozu is. She's being really cute and appealing right now; we've never seen her acting normal before. I like her so much. Chiana notes how hot Karohm is, and Rygel says something awesome: "Sikozu thinks with her head, not her kuzitza." Chiana agrees that this is a problem. She's really getting back to her roots these days; I like it. I like her being the galactic advocate for sex again. "We were smart to send her ahead," Rygel notes, since it's immediately clear that the Kalish are running the station. Scorpius puts his hands on the Muppet and fills us in on how the Kalish are a conquered species that serves the Scarran empire out of the need to survive. Just like the Charrids, only vastly less

grody. Also with amazing *H For Hero* magic powers! Rygel notes that another word for "survival" is "collaboration."

Karohm fills us in on Sikoze's cover story, which isn't entirely untrue except for how her cover stories are matreshka-crazy: "Diplomatic missions throughout Tormented Space! You must lead an interesting life." She says she's tired of the "incessant travel" and that she envies his "stable position"; she somehow makes "stable position" sound like some kind of an esoteric sexual prowess. He reaches for her hand and says it's really just quite boring; she demurs. John circles them. Karohm offers to trade jobs, but really he's too pretty to be kissing Scorpius so I think they should stay where they're at. She's too pretty for it too, but she's also creepy enough for it, which Karohm is not. They are very cute together; she touches his nose and he says they'll meet up later.

Sikoze wanders to some vending machines on another wall, near John's plainly false insouciance. "Got anything to tell me?" he whispers, and she says the words: "Aeryn is here." Sikoze grabs her food from the machine and John nearly smiles, never looking at her. "Say that again." She does, clearly pleased as well, and he asks where. Aeryn is still in Jenek's freighter...which just finished quarantine and will be leaving in half an hour. Which coincidentally is how much episode is left. She walks away, never having looked at him, and he watches her go.

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Aeryn's on her back on a gurney with more of those curled metal spikes, this time lining its sides, in a yellow bodysuit. Nurse injects her with some stuff that won't hurt the baby, she says, but will keep Aeryn docile. Aeryn nearly begins to cry as the Nurse chides her for not letting her "make things so much easier" for her. "If only you'd trust me." Aeryn watches her, silent and hateful, and closes her eyes as the drugs take hold.

WTF half an hour is how Chiana feels about things. John's like, so we are grabbing guns and kicking some doors in? But Scorpius, total downer that he is, points out how they would totally die in five seconds if they did that. Just because Aeryn's not here doesn't mean she gets to make the plan! John mentions that D'Argo and Noranti are hanging back in *Lo'La*, their "hole card," and again Scorpius is forced to pooh-pooh: "If D'Argo's ship attacked a Scarran freighter, a fleet of Scarran warships would instantly be dispatched after us." Not to mention, Rygel chimes in, how the Scarran freighter still has Aeryn for a hostage. "We have a far greater chance here than at any Scarran military base," says Scorpius, but like, we heard the name "Katrati" so many times the last two episodes I actually got a tattoo of it on my ass so why are we fucking around? Rygel says he has an idea that involves binge-eating. So that should be gross. Chiana stands and alerts everybody as Captain Jenek enters the commons with an eye-patched Charrid; Jenek's grumbling that fifteen minutes is long enough for a snack, and they sit down. A woman nearby immediately clears out; John realizes this is the freighter captain Sikoze told them about before they got there. Scorpius looks at Jenek and then stands up, I'm sure for some impending bad-assery.

The station PA broadcasts something and the Charrid says something, and Jenek agrees with his assessment: "Many weaknesses." Jenek greets the approaching Scorpius and tells the Charrid to get lost. He does, snarling, and Jenek and the two baddies sit down for a chat. "Now listen carefully: my name is Captain Wentrask. My

mission demands absolute secrecy. My proof code is zenark devra zenark prida." Jenek growls, recognizing a passcode for Intelligence (Ministry of Dissimulation), but laughs and says he's not interested in "spies and their intricate games." He introduces himself and says they should just stay out of each other's way; Scorpius agrees and leaves. Still, that was moderately bad-ass. Rygel, watching them, belches; Jenek's Charrid bitches about how Wentrask is a half-breed, and Jenek says to forget it and bounce.

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Aeryn lies on a red pillow, slowly opens her eyes, frowning at a shadow person above her. It becomes John, who tells her "it's time" and that she's "doing good." She smiles and puts her hand over his, where he lovingly caresses her body. She reaches for his face and touches her chin; he reiterates that she's "doing great." He disappears and she begins to weep. She can't speak; her mouth isn't working. It's a nightmare, the kind where you can't talk. It's horrible to watch. She cries out wordlessly, reaching for the place where John was, as the Nurse again tells her to stop struggling. She slaps her stomach and continues to speak nothing. The things she would say if she could speak. The things she would do if she weren't tied down. "Must I keep sedating you? Must you keep making things difficult for yourself?" Tears stream from Aeryn's eyes as she stares into the empty space where John was. "There's no point in fighting. You know that." She loses herself in sobs, shaking.

Rygel continues to stuff food in his mouth; John finally tells him to stop already. "That's enough, all right," Rygel says, and asks for one more second. He belches. Oh man this is going to be bad. Chiana notices Nurse entering the commons -- Rygel continues to belch -- and John cowboys up to talk to her, Sebacean to fake-Sebacean. Chiana's not feeling it: "It's another person you're got to fool." Rygel says the scariest words the Dominar has ever uttered: "This will be convincing. Stand back." John and Chiana back the hell up off him, and John asks him loudly if he's okay; Nurse turns to look. Rygel groans and complains and Dr. Talnell joins the Nurse in staring. Soon enough, he barfs massively in radioactive green, in an impressive stream that almost nails Nurse. Talnell asks if he's okay and John says probably it's their "lousy food" doing it. Chiana walks over and puts her hands on the Muppet comfortingly. "Yes, I'm sure of it," Rygel mumbles, but Talnell's not so sure. "Have you ever had an emesis of this severity before?" Just once, he says, but it was cured: he once caught "a touch of Dermafollica." Talnell jumps and says it's a highly contagious disease, but Rygel tells him to chill: "They said it was dormant." Good old Rygel. Using his best skills, like barfing and pissing, for reasons of his own, without telling anybody what he's doing. Talnell puts the station on lockdown: "Anchor all vessels to their docking ports." Mission accomplished. Nurse runs off because she hates dying of the plague, and also because Jenek is going to bust a gut when he finds out they're still being detained.

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Rygel lies under a shiny blanket in an observation room; Talnell and Jenek watch him carefully, along with Karohm the Kalish and Sikoze. Jenek is protesting loudly, of course, about being kept at the way station, and Talnell tries to get shirty with him and says it's the laws of the Scarran Hierarchy so whatever. Jenek stares at Rygel and asks if they're any evidence that the Dermafollica is trouble; he says not yet but that

he's gotta err on the side of caution. "I'm unfamiliar with Hynerian Dermafollica," he admits, but says he's getting info from a medical database at Simstef -- which Karohm catches for him. Jenek watches and takes a Bird of Paradise blossom from a dish on Talnell's desk, biting it irritably. Jenek is so, so beautiful -- almost as lovely as the Emperor himself -- I don't remember seeing this many close-ups of him last week. "I've also sent out a request for all...doctors or healers with any knowledge of the disease," Karohm says, and the clearly wiggin' Talnell says it's not usual protocol, but this time it's a good idea. Jenek continues to eat blossoms, distractedly, and Karohm thanks Sikoze for suggesting the APB. She continues to be 100% adorable. Chiana chats up another young Kalish in the commons, not as good-looking as the other one but clever and friendly. They laugh about how paranoid everybody's being about "a few germs," and how a stiff drink should kill anything anyway. They head for a table, giggling and flirting, as Noranti and D'Argo enter. Talnell appears and welcomes her; she introduces herself and D'Argo as "Utu-Noranti Pralatong, Alleviator and Healer" and her "personal assistant." She tells D'Argo to stay put while she checks on the Hynerian and D'Argo gives a grumpy but believable "Yes, Healer." Talnell's like, "A Luxan? Assistant?" And she says yes: "Luxans make fine pilots, exceptional bodyguards and superlative lovers." She laughs, he looks like he just got some Dermafollica of the barfer.

Scorpius is Wentrisk of Scarran Intelligence, with his Nebari and Hynerian spies, one of whom is suddenly ailing from a dormant fake disease. John is a Peacekeeper and a Scarran spy. Sikoze is a diplomat. Noranti and D'Argo are a healer and her assistant. None of them know each other. Nobody's who they are. This is politics. The only person who's being herself is the one person who finally has given up shape-shifting, because she's too tired, and now all she's got is her anger and her despair.

As Noranti and Talnell enter the observation room, Karohm hands over the data from Simstef -- it's translucent and black like an x-ray, with a froggy little Visible Hynerian on it. Noranti shushes Rygel silently and he nods, lying back and groaning.

"Apparently we've brought you here for nothing, Healer: this isn't Dermafollica at all." Noranti disagrees with him, saying it's too soon to tell. Talnell says Rygel's skin, per the Simstef info, should be sloughing by now. She takes the film and looks at it for awhile. "Yes, well. You see, Dermafollica is very difficult to diagnose. The bacteria that causes the virus is effectively undetectable." Her pretend professionalism is about as cagey as John leaning up against things like [Jordan Catalano](#) all episode. Talnell says that nonetheless, Rygel doesn't have a whole bunch of other symptoms, and gives it an hour before he lifts the lockdown. She runs off all crazy to manufacture some symptoms.

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Inside the med bay, Noranti crushes some greens in her hand as Rygel moans, and of course she spits on them, because that's what they have in common. Being gross. Talnell kind of winces, but then, Talnell never saw her belly-dancing so his gross-out threshold is way high, comparatively. She confirms that Rygel really did once have Dermafollica, and he mentions that he barely survived, and four of his wives died. She holds out the Play-Doh-ish stuff she just got together, and when he refuses to eat it, she twists him by the eyebrow. "Swallow." Talnell nods and smiles as Rygel gulps it down: "Was that absolutely essential?" She says it absolutely was, and he gets

queasy with it. Mortification of the flesh: what you have is the higher self, the Zhaan 2.0, taking a lie and making it real. Rygel, the body -- everything's medical in this episode, even the things that don't seem to be, and everything medical in this episode means something else -- is getting put through a ringer here, because it's highest on the pyramid.

Chiana puts the screws to the young Kalish and asks if he wants to rock out. He's like, "It is getting late, maybe we should go somewhere." D'Argo stares at them; Chiana asks if he's got a suggestion. Noranti approaches D'Argo as he stares at them; I get worried. She tends to make bad calls, relationship-wise. There's some almost-double entendre about the guy's ship is not so big, maybe, but that's really less important than "speed and maneuverability," and they laugh, and they touch each other a whole lot. D'Argo approaches posthaste, calling her "Nebari girl," and scares the kid off easily. D'Argo sits, smiling, in the seat the kid just left. Chiana arranges herself so that their knees are touching, and as one they lean forward, touching foreheads. It's wonderful. D'Argo sighs and Chiana smiles. D'Argo lets her in that the whole Rygel scam is working and that he and Noranti knew to play along once they heard Sikozu's voice on Karohm's transmission. "Smart Luxan," she murmurs, so much more self-assured and lovely now that things are as they should be. They touch noses. Rygel is sloughing, so Talnall keeps the lockdown in effect. Rygel looks gross, like he's covered in dry snot, and...it's a little-known discipline, skin-sloughing Muppets, but they've found themselves a savant at it. He looks totally gross and totally sick and totally real. Poor little fucker.

Noranti explains to Scorpius that Dermafollica can, in fact, infect non-Hynerians, and that it kills them without warning when it does. John says frell that, he's getting in an airlock, but Noranti says that it's well too late. "Everyone on this station or any vessels docked to it has already been exposed." Everybody looks at everybody else. Noranti says she will concoct a cure, but needs all kinds of supplies for her potions and spells and whatever. Whatever stuff we'll be seeing her spit on shortly. She asks Captain Jenek if he has anything on the freighter and he tells her nobody's getting on his ship. Wentrask offers the healer the use of his Leviathan's med facilities. Chiana and John stand up to escort her onto *Moya*, as ordered.

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"Nice job, Granny. You scammed 'em." Noranti says she couldn't scam Talnall, and Chiana's like, kind of, though, because he thinks Rygel's really sick; Noranti explains that she totally reactivated the Dermafollica in Rygel's system and that the lie is now completely true. John asks if she can deactivate it, and she says she hopes so. And if not, Chiana asks? Rygel dies. She keeps up a quick pace; John and Chiana stop and go whoa.

Back in the lab, Chiana's incensed. "Are you tekking? What are you trying to do, kill Rygel?" Noranti's pretty sure he won't die, because she's almost certain she can cure him. John's like, so is it contagious? And she says sometimes. They go around and around and she's just like, "Get out of my ass about it, I'm going to fix it." Chiana wigs about how she's infected everybody with "the frelling Hynerian plague," and Noranti spills the important fact that Nebari and Scarrans are both immune to the disease. Which leaves Charrids, Kalish, Norantis, and possibly John and Scorpius. And Aeryn. John freaks out and Chiana bitches at her, loud: "You'll kill Aeryn even before we get a

chance to save her!" Noranti stares her right in the eyes: "Don't you say that! Don't you dare say that!" She promises once more that she will fix this, and explains that she's just doing what Rygel needed her to do for the plan: "You wanted a plague, I gave you one. Without real symptoms, the lockdown is lifted, Aeryn is on her way to the Scarran base and you are felled. Now, I did what I had to do. I suggest you do the same." It's like watching the whole family do the Inanna thing as a single person: together they mortify the body to save the spirit.

Captain Jenek gets pushy with Talnell about how he has a patient he "must protect," and Talnell reminds him that his passenger has already been exposed, just like everybody, and Jenek complains -- rationally -- that the facilities on Katratzi are better and more likely to cure the disease. Talnell points out that this means exposing the base personnel, and Jenek reminds him it's not a problem: "Scarrans are immune to this disease." But, of course, the Kalish aren't. "I won't be held responsible for loosing a virus that could prove catastrophic to my own people. Your vessel isn't leaving, Captain." Jenek growls as Karohm informs them that Noranti's asking to take Rygel onboard *Moya*. "Easier to take tissue samples that way." Jenek starts to wig about taking him out of isolation, but Talnell's like, we've all been exposed, so it doesn't really matter. Just get him out of here.

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Rygel on *Moya*, watching Noranti do her thing. "What in the frelling yotz where you thinking, you madwoman? *You're* a plague! A withered, three-eyed, bad-smelling pestilence!" She keeps working and tells him to yell at her later. "I'll be dead later!" She tells him the yelling and bitching is very distracting and maybe it's in his best interest to shut the hell up. She is so awesome.

Scorpius follows John through *Moya*, trying to explain, like in every episode, about reality and sometimes reality is a bummer. John's not feeling him on this issue, and like in every episode, he throws up a lot of irrelevant bullshit so he won't have to deal with logic or thinking. "What has it bought us?" he asks, about Noranti's little plague scheme, and Scorpius yells: "Time!" A theme throughout the trilogy starts here and ends in a wonderful punchline in the finale: "What are we doing with that time? Can't answer that? Right. That's why someone's got to get on that freighter." John opens a metal crate, loudly, and Scorpius begs him to chill out: "Sikozu is working on it. If she could access schematics of the freighter..." John cuts him off, saying that schematics can't tell them where Aeryn is or if she's okay. "Someone has got to go in." Scorpius is like, "As if! Like Jenek's gonna give you a tour?" John looks at him seriously:

"Grasshopper. You aim too high. Jenek is not the only one with access."

John struts into the commons in his Peacekeeper uniform, aiming to be Chiana for a sec. He sits down with Nursie and offers to bone her. Like, no prelude: "I only fuck Sebaceans, and it's been six months." She is very awesome this whole scene: "I don't *do* Peacekeepers, so why waste your time?" He puts a small packet between his teeth and it hangs down and he makes quite a face. "This is something for a special friend. It's the Sebacean cure for Hynerian Dermafollica." She doesn't believe him, he says she could analyze it but whatever, why waste your time, and I want to think that she busts this backflip at least 30/70 for Aeryn, because that makes her more interesting and less Frau Blucher: "Where'd...you get that?" He stops in his tracks and gets all sexy some more. "I don't kiss and tell, but...you can be sure you're not gettin' it

anywhere else." She protests that it rarely infects Sebaceans, but he's like, "Dead before you know it, though." He puts the vial back between his teeth and waggles at her. "I just want to share." It's not so much that she's a traitor to her people and a Nazi experimenter and a creep that gets to me, it's that I don't understand a person who could think twice about doin' John Crichton. That is a sick mind in there.

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John and Nurse walk back through the station toward the freighter and get stopped by a guard, but Nurse says even though he's a PK, he's with her. Easy. They pass some Charrids and John is very touchy and shifty as they walk, checking his six the whole time. Nurse excuses herself, maybe to freshen up or something, and John makes small talk, sitting down on one of the ugly gurney beds and bouncing -- hard -- to make it squeak. He is not kidding with this shit! She finally just holds out her hand: "Cure now." He's whoring himself to get on the freighter; she's whoring herself so she won't die. It's all very wartime right now. He tells her it's concentrated -- just enough for both of them. She's unhappy about that, admitting she's got a Sebacean patient as well. John looks past some equipment and stuff toward us; in the foreground is Aeryn, tied to her bunk. He whispers to himself, "You bastard," as Nurse gets the stuff diluting. "Too bad for them," he says, and knocks her out.

John hurries to Aeryn, who heartbreakingly resists him as he kneels beside her, moaning wordlessly and waving him away. Pushing against him. The Prisoner's Dilemma. He begs her to stop, to hold still so he can untie her. "No, it's me. I'm real. Aeryn." She weeps, too tired for hope, and puts her arms over her face, whimpering. He can barely look at her as he's untying her wrists. Jenek's Charrid comes in with a gun and tells John to cut it out. "Don't do anything stupid," John says smoothly, even as she's breaking up at his side. "Scarran Hierarchy paid good crindars for me. They wouldn't want their package delivered damaged." Aeryn cries, batting at the air, unable to speak. The Charrid drops John and stares down at Aeryn.

Commercial, and then John on his knees in the freighter, getting Scarran heat-probed by Jenek. The Charrid and Nurse watch. "He claimed it was a cure for Hynerian Dermafollica." Jenek asks if it was genuine and John spits in the fire, grunting: "No, it's a fake." Jenek asks why he went through the whole thing and John laughs, gasping in the heat: "Because: horny. I am looking for a Sebacean woman." Nurse is like, you totally attacked me and then tried to untie a patient, and John gags: "No offense, but she's sexier than you." He puts on a gross face and explains in no uncertain terms his plans for the patient -- and it's all true. Which is how, if you're getting Scarran Heat-Breathed, you should be quick on your feet, [Hot Box](#) or no. "Taken her back to my ship. Felled her. Made babies." Aww. He would have, too! Lies becoming truth, becoming lies, and things just getting worse and scarier.

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Scorpius walks into the room and bitches at Jenek for torturing his Peacekeeper; Jenek finally lets John drop and tells Scorpius about how John was on the ship "attempting to recreate." I hate that everybody buys this. I hate Scarrans that are like, "Oh snap, you rape medical patients too?" John admits that this was the plan, and Scorpius begs Jenek's pardon: "I will deal with him." Jenek growls, but Scorpius gives him the glare and repeats himself. Jenek stares at his creepy ass for a sec and then motions everybody out of the room. John wiggles, getting over the heat breath and

groaning, and Scorpius is like, "How did you avoid the heat probe? Was it Katoya's training?" John says no, it was the truth, kind of. If you're a nasty person like Jenek is. He pushes himself up onto his knees. "Aeryn's in there. We gotta get her out." Scorpius says, again, that "Sikozu is gathering information" for that stuff. It's a deliberate parallel, now twice in the episode: Let my girlfriend help us help your girlfriend, and also please stop acting like your girlfriend. "We will free Officer Sun." John grunts, puts his hands on Scorpius's shoulders to lift himself up. As usual. Sikozu brings more films to Karohm, this time Dermafollica info from "the Rosrob Center." Karohm sexily frets that he hasn't gotten a response from the Diagnosians on Coldjen, and like, I'm sure they're great, but I don't like involving myself with Diagnosians if I can help it. He slaps the console and curses, frustrated. Sikozu suggests that he take a wee nap and she'll monitor the transmissions for him. He stares at her.

Noranti props Rygel up and gives him something to boost his antibodies and "cleanse him of the disease." Rygel obeys and chokes it down; Noranti worries that it's only good for Hynerians, which Rygel doesn't think is a problem. But because he's getting better at being a person, he corrects and elaborates: "I mean, uh...has anyone else contracted the sickness?" Not yet. "And they may not, but there's always a chance." Oh, it'll happen. You can't release a plague in the lion's den and not have some dead people at the end of the story, that would be bad storying. It also would lessen the impact of what she did to Rygel, which is one of the main cool things about the trilogy. As she works, Rygel suddenly falls back on the table with a moan; she lifts his hand and it drops, totally limp. She screams his name, suddenly terrified.

Chiana wanders into commons and notices the Kalish guy that she was flirting with at a table. For a sec I thought it was Karohm taking a nap, which would be so classy, but no, it's the other guy. "You with the big ship," she says, approaching, and he just coughs weakly. Closer inspection reveals a little bit of Dermafollica happening. Talnell notices this going on and drags Karohm into the commons, leaving Sikozu at the monitor. Chiana gets scared and stuttery, asking quietly and then loudly for a healer, and everybody bounces from the commons. The kid gags and starts drooling; she comforts him as well as she can as he seizes and gags. Of course Chiana's immune: the body is her territory and her strength. It's what makes her powers (and her story this season) so scary: intuition is the opposite of this, her natural place in the world. On the whole station, you can guarantee she'd be the only one besides the Scarrans that wouldn't catch it.

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Rygel lies on his back, picking at his skin; Talnell informs Noranti that Mister Motion Of The Ocean is dead, and says Jenek wants her on his freighter. "No, no, no, no," she grumbles crazily. "I must find this remedy. He may come here if he chooses." Talnell insists. Elsewhere, Scorpius is again demanding that Captain Jenek give Noranti supplies for a cure. Jenek totally walks away. I would never advise turning your back on Scorpius, but then that goes without saying. "You must realize we have a common problem: we both have cargo that needs protecting." Talnell beckons Jenek and he leaves Scorpius to talk to him, tossing off an "I'll solve my own problems" as he goes. Scarrans are even dicks to each other! Scorpius sighs and sits down on a bench and thinks about how being a half-breed whose body is constantly in revolt against itself is

not always fun and games because sometimes the horror of racism gets you in the chin when you least expect it.

Sikozu projects the freighter floor plan, in *Moya's* Command: "The Scarran freighter is not only docked to the station, but it is tied to its power grid as well. From station control, I can force a power surge that will disrupt the circuits of both the station and the freighter." D'Argo notes that means knocking out the lights, the alarms, and even the ugly Scarran DRDs with the fins, and Chiana asks how long -- how much time -- they'll have with the outage. Thirty seconds, before the emergency overrides activate. D'Argo: "Okay. Once we've rescued Aeryn, we've gotta get *Moya* off that station."

Sikozu says she can probably get the docking locks bypassed too, and Chiana's like, "'Probably'?" So what was she doing with Karohm that whole time? Makin' out on him, if she's smart. John asks about the way station's parking stickers, and D'Argo nods. "Security beacons. We'll need some." Sikozu says if they rescue Aeryn -- and Chiana corrects her -- "Sorry, yes. *When* we rescue Aeryn, we simply starburst away from Scarran space." D'Argo worries about if they end up starbursting deeper into Scarran space, John worries about what if the freighter takes off with Aeryn. Sikozu says in the latter case, "we abandon all hope." And John corrects her this time: "...We abandon all hope of leading long and prosperous lives, and we follow the freighter." Sikozu sighs, and John jokes that she's still learning how we do things.

He and D'Argo take off, but so far here's how we do things: unleash plagues on innocents, run around lying all the time about everything, beat up people at random, and two weeks ago, "we" sold out the entire galaxy. And for why? For Aeryn. The way "we" do things is by self-describing our areas of responsibility and saying, "This is who I am prepared to save, and this is who is not my problem." There's a beautiful transition in the *Buffy* arc like this: at one point to save the world you kill a loved one, and then next time around you've reprioritized, and you're willing to kill your friends if they try to kill your loved one. I totally get it. It's actually a sign of maturing, that you realize there are these differing levels of responsibility, and that they are rooted in blood. It's a hard truth and one that is always impressive in these shows, to actually see it play out, whether it's right or wrong, so I approve of the viewpoint getting expressed whatever the actual morality of it. But Sikozu is a different kind of person, with different -- and equally or more valid -- concerns: she goes on sacrificing herself for her entire race. She'd burn Scorpius so fast for that, I think. And that's the Prisoner's Dilemma in different clothes, because it has to do with family, and what you do for family. And I see no reason, knowing Sikozu, that she should ever have to learn how "we" do things, because she's never been, or asked to be, part of the family. And that's the difference between her and Jool, and that's why she showed up after Jool was gone, because she's the Crais 2.0 of the Scarrans but she's also the Jool 2.0 of John's relationship with science and politics. (Not to mention being the Stark 2.0 of John's relationship with Scorpius himself, but we already talked about that.) Curiouser and curiouser and more complex all the time. This season is hard to do in your head.

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Aeryn lies on her bunk, unconscious, as Noranti enters the freighter's med bay telling Talnell to stop touching her: "You don't have to use force, I want to find a cure as much as you do." Talnell has reprocessed his areas of responsibility somewhat: "You will find a cure and we will have it first." Even worse than Nurse is he, all of a sudden.

Jenek and his Charrid follow, and Jenek immediately starts ordering Nurse around, but guess what! She's got the plague! See you in the *Peacekeeper Wars*, bitch. At least with that character, you get to be pretty. Jenek confirms that she's dead and also that he does not care. He tells Noranti and Talnell to check Aeryn, and Noranti immediately runs over to her and grabs her by the throat, freaking her out but getting her attention. Noranti really has a particular way of doing things, doesn't she. "Save your strength. Don't try to speak." Talnell joins her and Aeryn's eyes roll around in their sockets. "She doesn't appear to be infected," says Noranti, and Jenek's like, yeah, Nursie was looking pretty great too until her face fell off. Noranti tells him she can probably fix Aeryn if she gets sick, and Jenek remembers the baby. "Her fetus must be saved. Is there a suitable recipient for a transplant?" Noranti jumps back, horrified, but quickly recovers: "What? No! ...Anyway, it wouldn't do any good: all the females here are equally at risk from this disease." Dammit, Noranti! You just handed it to him. Talnell brings up Chiana, of course, which means things are going to get really horrible, really quickly. I don't want to watch this part at all. The deal at the beginning where Aeryn tried to talk and couldn't was pretty bad. This is worse. Chiana runs into some Charrid on *Moya*, calls him "feckface" and keeps walking, and then...it's interesting, because she's kind of psychic, I think. Back on that Leviathan husk where they got the fake Aeryn, both Aeryn and Sikozu acted like Charrids were kind of hardcore, but now here, not only does Chiana basically wipe the floor with them, she also sees them coming from strange angles. I don't know how this works out, but she's never been the ninja of the group, and it would seem, wouldn't it, that her abilities would put her at an advantage here. Maybe it's just when we try to consciously use intuition that we blind ourselves to it. Eventually it doesn't really matter; eventually they catch her, and tie her up, and take her off *Moya*. Bit later, and Sikozu's showing her cards again w/r/t how she actually adores Chiana: "They *took Chiana by force* and you just *let them*?" Pilot's like, "I had no idea." Scorpius calms Sikozu: "Recriminations can wait. We must act. Are you ready?" I really like that little scene.

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Aeryn gasps and jerks as Jenek touches her head with his hand, and his hand? Is also gorgeous. He tells her to calm the hell down and takes off; she turns wild eyes on Noranti. "Oh, we can't let them!" Noranti tells her it won't happen: "I won't *let* it happen." And besides, she says, they'll never find Chiana anyway. Cue Chiana screaming and squealing as the Charrids bring her in. She's struggling, but not for long. Jenek's like, "Prepare her for the procedure," and as she's dragged past, notices Aeryn tied down. "What the frell's going on?" Talnell offers to sedate Chiana; Chiana and Noranti both scream, "No!" Noranti throws herself onto Talnell's back and is plucked off by a Charrid; they inject Chiana. Noranti continues to scream, more upset maybe than we've ever seen her: "No, stop! Stop! This is wrong! This patient has been drugged, she is weak! She may die from this procedure." She's not just talking about Aeryn. Aeryn's still fighting; Chiana is beginning to shut down. Her eyes are going that black they only go when she's asked to bear more than she can. Jenek says he doesn't care if Aeryn dies, of course, and Chiana begins to whisper and plead. Invasion; violation. This is so cruel. They don't even know, they think they're being the usual kind of cruel. It's hard. Metal arms slowly come sliding out of the sides

of Aeryn's gurney as she struggles and begs...and their spiked ends come ramming down into her, pinning her to the table. Jeez! Aeryn screams a way I've never heard; Chiana and Noranti see it. Chiana is still tied on her gurney, and the Charrid is holding Noranti back. Aeryn stops screaming and her eyes close. There are ways in which that was the most troubling image this show has ever offered. I'm not a fan of that scene.

Aeryn's still pinned, losing it; Noranti prepares to inject her with anesthetic, and Talnell tells her to give it to Chiana instead. Noranti says Aeryn needs it more, given the *House On Haunted Hill* shit going on currently, and the Charrid, at Talnell's signal, grabs her, pinning her arms back. She struggles mightily, informing them they won't be cutting on Aeryn today, and Talnell ignores her, scalpel in hand. Talnell heads over to Chiana, who has gotten some energy back; she tells him to get the frelling knife away from her and spits in his face. "Very strong," he says. "She'll make an excellent host." He sure did get eeeeeevil all of a sudden. I guess the plague really wiggled him. He shoots Chiana in the arm with the painkiller, and Jenek threatens Talnell that if anything happens to the fetus, Chiana and Aeryn both are dead meat. Karohm calls Jenek on the PA, interrupting, saying that Captain Wentrask is demanding "an urgent word," and Jenek's like, "For real? I'll be right the hell there." Yikes. He takes off, calling for his Charrid (Ralnahk, apparently); Chiana stares at Talnell, terrified and woozy.

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Jenek sits with Scorpius and they speak quietly. Scorpius says he requires cooperation from Jenek, who says he can't compel anything from him because Scorpius is not the boss of him. OR IS HE? Scorpius gets real: "Jenek. I know that your prisoner is the Peacekeeper Aeryn Sun, and that you are taking her to Katratzi for Minister Ahkna. I also know that if my mission fails, your mission becomes irrelevant. As do you." Hoo-hoo. Jenek: "Continue." Heh. I love him.

Sikozu gets sneaky in the control room, looking at things and pressing buttons and creeping around, so you know its three...two...one...yep, there's Karohm, right on cue, with a gun on her. Sikozu's all, hey, I was just checking for some med reports and being totally helpful, dude, but he interrupts her: "Someone's been downloading the station codes and schematics." He knew it had to be her, but he's still "disappointed." He looks great in that color. He's too hot to die! They both are! I hate the subjugation of the Kalish! Talk your way out of this, Sputnik!

Noranti bitches at Talnell, who is now rubbing his hands together like a mantis fat on scenery, about how they will never pull this off, and Aeryn will die, and Chiana will die, and the baby will die, and everybody will die. And also this is a terrible, horrible thing they are doing. Talnell's like, "Mwah ha hahaha ha ha!" And then he twirls his mustache. On *Moya*, John picks up his rifle from the table, next to 1812; D'Argo's got his Qualta locked and loaded. John whines that Sikozu, in the midst of being discovered creepin' about, hasn't frelled the lights and alarms yet. Talnell tells Noranti that -- brevity being the soul of fetal transfer -- they'll have to cut them both open at once. Awesome. D'Argo heads out to check on Sikozu, who's got her hands up like a hostage negotiator, walking toward Karohm: "Listen to me, Karohm. Two, possibly three females are being held, against their will, on the Scarran freighter." And they're about to get cut open. Noranti holds her scalpel over Aeryn's womb, and rolls her

eyes, and they gasp, horrified. "They pose the Scarrans no threat," Sikoze explains. "Their imprisonment is completely unjust." Karohm says he believes her, but laughs when she asks for his help. "Of course not! I'm going to lock you up." Aw, damn. You just can't judge a book's collaborationist tendencies from its cover, I guess is the point. D'Argo appears and tongue-lashes Karohm in the neck, dropping him. D'Argo, lamely: "How wrong was *he*?" (Rejected lines include, I believe: "Could he have *been* any more wrong?" and "...*No!*") D'Argo politely asks Sikoze to get it together and "do what you said you were gonna do," and she nods, turning back to the control console.

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Noranti backs up off Aeryn and gives Talnell her professional opinion, which is interestingly enough that they should not do what they are doing. Talnell points out the elephant in the room, which is Jenek eating their lunch in a second.

Scorpius explains to Jenek that Ahkna only wants Aeryn to try and get the "possible information" in John's head. "Now, my Peacekeeper defector can give you John Crichton himself. Which mission do you think is more vital?"

Sikoze unlocks the docking ports on *Moya*, *Lo'La*, and the transport pod she rode down in and starts on the power grid, as D'Argo pulls out the security beacons he's just located in a drawer. She gives him a gorgeous, just brilliant smile: impressed, conquered by the concept of teamwork. Noranti starts a speechlet about how "there are three lives here" and Talnell, scared for his own ass, finally interrupts her and shrieks: "Dr. Pralatong, I beg you!" And that's when the lights go out. "Showtime," John says, and heads out into the bay with his rifle and a lantern. Scorpius and Jenek look around and get growly in the darkness. The station PA goes all nasty-sounding Scarran stuff. There's emergency lighting near the Scarran freighter, of course, which makes it all the easier for John to kill a bunch of Charrids with his gun.

Tallnell comms, demanding that Karohm tell him what's going on; a Charrid grabs Noranti and pulls her away from the doctor, and then John shoots him. Noranti hides behind a table; Tallnell hides behind Aeryn, promising to slit her throat. John shines his light on Tallnell's face; Noranti tells him to go for it. "He wouldn't dare: if the baby dies, Jenek'll burn him dead, so shoot." Tallnell promises he's not screwing around, and John almost smiles at him: "Kalish are supposed to be smart. Who do you think I believe?" Tallnell backs away from Aeryn with his hands in the air: "All right. Shoot me." And...John does. Tallnell drags a bunch of shit with him to the floor; he's injured but not dead. John joins Aeryn as Noranti offers that he should have killed the bastard. "My body count's already too high." Like on weirdo *Moya*? You're so not off the hook for that yet. You'll be paying for that precisely one scene from now, though, at quite a high premium, so I'm not even going to worry about it. He looks down at her, so still; touches her face with his hand, in its PK glove. Noranti says this to John: "The release is over here. Ready?" Aw, dude. Not necessary. He looks away, then back at Aeryn, and tells her to do it, and she does. The rib spikes retract; Aeryn gasps.

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The Charrid finds Scorpius and Jenek, who tells him to check on the freighter; Scorpius is like, totally, I gotta check mine too. Jenek clamps a hand on his shoulder and tells him to stay put. As the PA continues to get Scarran all over your ears, Jenek's Charrid finds the downed guards outside.

D'Argo is impatient with Sikozu, who's almost finished. She turns very deliberately away from him and talks patter -- "If I jam the docking port controls, the freighter won't be able to break free and follow us" -- while, with her hand, she melts a bunch of wires like she's a Scarran or something. See? A new magic power every week. I wish I was a Kalish. Or maybe like a crossing guard, that might be fun. I've never ridden in a hot-air balloon. I am a man of many wishes. Sikozu gasps in a way where this is either the worst of her abilities or, um, like the best. Her relationship with Scorpius is like, I don't know if she actually knows the difference either. Sikozu tries to cover, actually stuttering for like the first time ever, about how she merely cross-coupled the blinderfnitz with the shoobaloo and whatever, but they have to move so fast because the lights are going to come on.

John hurries off the freighter, Aeryn in his arms. Noranti follows, with Chiana. That darn Charrid yells at them and is quite aggressive; Chiana gasps as Noranti puts her down. The Charrid tells them to turn off the light and John tells her to do it; John brings up about how he "shouldn't be carrying," and the Charrid's like, "Carrying what?" That's when the lights come back on, and one of the Scarran DRDs comes out of nowhere all, "Hell no with that gun," and starts shooting. They hide as the DRDs accrete, and finally the Charrid drops. "...A gun," John says, not getting the irony at all, and they run past, meeting up with D'Argo and Sikozu. Noranti gives Chiana to D'Argo, who carries her tenderly, and they all run like hell.

Jenek comms for Ralnahk and gets no report; so he growls at Scorpius because things are clearly going south. There are fisticuffs. Scorpius fights a good game, but Jenek has like a foot on him easy, and tosses him eventually into a table.

John hurries into *Moya's* docking bay, carrying Aeryn; D'Argo follows with Chiana, who tells him she can stand on her own for a sec. Pilot comms that the docking collar has released *Moya* and he -- perhaps unnecessarily -- tells Pilot to get starburst up and running. Pilot's like, "Done." I wonder what Pilot's been up to this whole time. I bet you can play really complicated solitaire with four arms. And as we learned from *Spider-Man 2*, all you need to accomplish *cold fusion* is *more arms*, so maybe that's how he amuses himself. ... Yeah, that's still stupid. Just checking.

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Jenek's like, "I see by the fact that we're beating the shit out of each other that we are not on the same side," as he slams Scorpius face first into all manner of things, to the point where Scorpius barfs. "Who are you, and what is your mission?" Scorpius is like, "Shut up and hold my hair back, bitch!" and then he passes out.

Lo'La and Sikozu's pod follow *Moya* out into space. Sikozu docks and runs onto Command with D'Argo and Chiana, worried about Scorpius. Pilot tells her he's not gotten any comms or response from Scorpius, but whatever, and D'Argo's like, "Make sure you get my ship with the docking web, okay?" Sikozu asks them to worry about Scorpius for a second, and Chiana's awesome: "What about him?" Sikozu's like, "For starters? He might've been captured?" And Chiana looks at her blankly: "Or killed." D'Argo says that is a beautiful wish and tells Pilot to starburst ASAP. Sikozu goes "hell no" and starts off on a rant, so Chiana knocks her out with a fist to the face. Not the face! Pilot notifies them that starburst is imminent as Sikozu drops. Chiana looks down at her, totally irritated: "Why doesn't she ever listen?"

Not actually that easy. John lays Aeryn gently down in his quarters; as he reaches for a blanket, she starts to jerk and shudder and struggle, trying to get away from him. "It's all right. Aeryn! It's all right." She gapes at him, wild. "You're here," he nods, and she holds herself there, completely still. He reaches down, to cover her legs, and she begins to weep with fear and relief and fear of that relief. "Is this real?" He smiles at her, tears not yet in his eyes: "It's real. You're on *Moya*." Aeryn stares at his face, tears on her cheeks. "You're safe," he says gently. She shudders and draws another long breath. "What about the baby?" He assures her that her baby is fine, caresses her hair. "Everything's gonna be okay," he whispers to her sweetly. "Sleep." She lies back slowly, still streaked with tears, and he strokes her forehead for a while before getting up. "Stay," she says. So quietly. He looks down, opens his mouth to speak, and then lowers himself to her side again. She reaches out, to touch his face. He turns, his mouth into her palm, and kisses it. He watches as she falls asleep, finally safe. Noranti pulls some skin off Rygel's face, and that's the best you can hope for. She tells him he's looking a little less horrible, and he snits, "I'm fine, thanks for asking. You nearly killed me." She continues to minister to him, pulling off the dead skin. Because this is *Farscape*: there's always more underneath. "But I did kill others," she says, more emotional than usual. "By my actions, I have taken innocent lives." Rygel sighs, and there's weight to this: "Welcome to *Moya*." She is not happy about any of this, but this is the truth he can speak, and she knows it. Her respect for him is one of the best things on a long list of things that make Granny great. "In my time as Dominar, some of my actions resulted in the deaths of the undeserving. Even when the cause is just, it's a hard thing to accept." The dignity and regal strength with which he makes this admission -- less about his actions and more about who he really is, under all the BS -- are a high point of the season. "I must seek forgiveness," she says. "From the Divine Eternal." Rygel holds out his hand, haltingly. Tenderly. "I can't help you there, but I can extend you my forgiveness." This shilquin song he plays for her. She takes his hand gratefully and squeezes it. Welcome to *Moya*.

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Wasn't that nice? About time something horrid happened. Aeryn rests, her hand in John's hair where he leans on the bed next to her, sleeping. She smiles sweetly, watching him. REM and then a scream, twisting away from her hand.

The old guys always talk about the difference between "invoke" and "evoke." You draw a circle on the floor and invite something inside it. It can't leave the circle and it can't touch you, and it can't leave until you say and it can't stay once you do. That's evoking something. It's a conversation you're having with something, but that thing is not you. Invoking, however...that's possession. Blood and milk, and the Scorpius that John could be. And you know his name. And you know the hateful face he wears.

A heavy old door opens before us, into a grainy faded black and white. Candelabras, velvet, dust and stone. Organ music, fog along the floor. A coffin sits on a dais in the center of the room. This is what killing off your loved ones earns you. Did you think there wouldn't be a price for that? Did you think you could play at being blood brothers with the Devil himself, and you wouldn't pay for it? Aeryn sure as fuck did. She knew. The lid of the coffin creaks open. Harvey sits up, in a dusty old tuxedo; he has long Nosferatu fingernails, which is how you know I'm not making this up. He taps them

together. John stands at his side, wearing a funeral suit. For all those that died, in this reality and others.

"Harvey? You're not dead." Of course not, he whispers, and chuckles like dead leaves. "I am the undead." John shakes his head. Not funny. "The son of a bitch said he took you out of my head." Harvey smiles, affecting a Romanian accent. "Scorpius, he upgraded me to...Harvey 2.0." It wasn't Scorpius that made that choice, though. I know the story, but this is arising from meanings under the surface too. "One of my many improvements: utter loyalty to Scorpius." Harvey sniffs and stares him down. John says, quite rightly, that this is not an improvement. Harvey says that it is. After all, his agenda is to eliminate the Scarran threat, and there's nothing dumb about that. Harvey clicks his fingernails together, loudly, and John protests. "You know I don't give a damn about his agenda." Harvey orders him to return to the station for Scorpius, and John drops the coffin lid on him -- like a garbage bin, isn't it? For people. No reason to think that it won't work again. "Go back to sleep before I drive a stake through your heart." He takes it easy, lying back in the coffin; John walks away.

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But Harvey says something, muffled in the coffin, and John turns to the coffin: "*What did you say?*" He said, "Scorpius knows everything you know, John." John opens the coffin the hell back up. "Meaning what?" It's another new feature of the 2.0 version. "Scorpius can hear me...I've been sharing the contents of your head with him. Memories, thoughts, dreams...wormhole technology..." John calls him a liar and turns away. "...And eventually, they will torture the information out of him, and everything they all wanted to know about wormholes will be theirs. Courtesy of John Crichton." John looks away, hurting, and finally turns fast and slams the coffin shut again, screams at Harvey to leave him alone. The black-and-white film burns away before our eyes. All those horrors you allow.

John's eyes jerk open and he screams, twisting his head away. "No!" Aeryn reaches for him, calming him. "Hey..." She touches his chin. Begs him not to do this again. How many times can you live through that with somebody? If you live? The second he got her back, he... You know, it's *Farscape*. Even if you weren't thinking about weirdo *Moya* and the horrors he invoked, you had to know: they were happy. She was touching his hair. They were fucked. "Hey...it's all right," she whispers, begging with her hands. "You have to go back for Scorpius. Tell her, John, tell her! You must rescue Scorpius. Tell her!" But he stays quiet, shaking. Because he knows Harvey's right, and the price for disobedience.

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- "When You Wake Up In The Morning, What Do You Hear?" -

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Previously, Chiana tells us, John snagged Aeryn off the Katratzi way station, leaving Scorpius behind. And now on *Farscape*: whirling jagged strips and stripes of metal bite and catch at Scorpius from every angle as War Minister Ahkna asks him where it

hurts -- "Here? Or here?" -- and frells him again. He pants under her heat breath and is obviously in great pain; she stops for a sec and tells him even "the smallest secret" might earn him an hour's peace. "I've been searching my whole life for a female like you," he says lasciviously, and buzzes his tongue at her like his anagrams are showing. She's grossed out, hitting him once more with the heat, and he throws back his head and screams. Much like with Sikoze, you have to wonder if this is actually a problem or if he's really hitting on her or...I don't know. It's Scorpius. He dresses like that on purpose.

Lo'La flies on with the family inside as we get our explanation of what's happened between chapters. Rygel and John discuss whether or not the Plan is genius or madness -- "You know there's a very fine line between the two" -- and Rygel says the difference is that geniuses make plans. Aeryn: "We're going to walk into the most heavily guarded base in the Scarran Empire, start a civil war, and walk out with Scorpius. What part of that do you not understand?" Ah. So we're all caught up now, then.

Sikoze and John grin at Aeryn because of her awesomeness and also that of the plan. Rygel wonders how the two of them can even believe it'll work, and D'Argo tells them *Lo'La's* finally been spotted. Down below there's an awfully ravaged planet; *Lo'La* flies down between the Scarran freighter and a Peacekeeper Command Carrier. Sikoze answers the Scarran hail, then tells Chiana the intriguing thing she just said, which was that they were escorting John Crichton, who wants to join the negotiations. I love how between each episode fifty awesome things happened and we're just getting on with it. I wish we could do this in real life. Like we'd meet for coffee and you'd say, "Remember? It's just like when you got your MBA." And I'd say, "Or that time you lost all that weight!" And then we'd talk about remember when I met David Walliams and we got gay married on a mountaintop, and wasn't that a to-do. Chiana thinks maybe telling them they've got John Crichton in the backseat is a great way to get blown to hezmana, and then the Scarran transmission comes through with docking clearance, and Sikoze sniffs at her. It's hard to remember he's a player, because he's never played the whole time.

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1812 gives John something and he thanks it tenderly, as Rygel reminds everyone they could still change their minds. While D'Argo does admit the truth of this, on the other hand they've just passed Jenek's freighter, so probably Scorpius is nearby. He does not say anything about Grayza's Command Carrier, but he's not one to over-explain simple visual symbolism. Chiana peers down at John's little project he's working on, which is a device with one round knob and several blinking lights: "Mankind's greatest contribution to the absurd. The thermonuclear bomb." Of all John's cruddy/awesome plans, I like the ones where you actually say, *Are you kidding me with this shit?* He radicalizes himself, makes himself radioactive -- makes himself on the outside what his particular brain makes him on the inside -- and that's how we'll slip between Grayza and Ahkna both. Not through science and not through violence either. And not through power.

Inside the base, Commandant Grayza addresses Emperor Staleek, the Most Beautiful Scarran Of All Time, who, even though his dickpiece on his suit is kind of scary and pointy and shouldn't be on TV, is still a total badass. They are attended by Captain

Braca and War Minister Ahkna. It's a chess game. Grayza: "Emperor, despite your War Minister being a lying sack of piss, you do need to know that I am only moderately lying about everything and that I would totally rape you for peace." I'm paraphrasing, basically. Other people at the table include assorted Scarrans, Charrids, and Kalish. No long-necks, I don't think, because this is a meritocracy: pretty Scarrans only. Oh, and Charrids.

"Every day you fail to take [peace] seriously," Grayza threatens, "we build more and more wormhole weapons. Soon the urge to use one will become irresistible." I wish everybody on Earth would be that honest, like how Kim Jong-il is constantly like, "This nuclear *arsenal* is burning a *hole* in my pocket!" Staleek's got the Cold War figured out: "Not to interrupt your bluster..." Gorgeous *and* funny? He needs to meet John, they've got a lot in common. Cue the door opening and John and Aeryn walk in, with swagger to spare. Staleek nods and goes on: "...But we have a guest who should make these talks even more amusing." Grayza greets him by name, he won't look her in the eye, just indicates he's "with partner," and tries to get the meeting going again. "What did we miss?" Staleek's like, "Not to interrupt your huge balls-out thing you've got going on right now, but how come you are so stupid? I should totally just have you disappeared right this second." John throws back his coat and shows Staleek his nuclear device, which juts up at an angle and, as I said, has a knob at the end. It's beeping, though, which is unsettling. "Plutonium core, tritium shell. Does that translate?" It does, and Staleek knows what it is: "A fission bomb." The stupid Scarran guards totally pull on John, and Staleek's like, "Put those down! *God!*"

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John admires Staleek's excellent bright red outfit and intuits that he's the Emperor; Staleek growls just a bit. John steps toward the table and explains that there are "multiple dead-man sensors" attached to him, "from every culture on my ship and a few cultures I haven't heard of." Commandant Grayza folds her hands on the table like a good girl. "My heart stops, we all go boom. My heart speeds up, it's boom again. Too hot, too cold, too happy, too sad, thirsty, hungry, bored...it's John Lee Hooker time. Boom, boom, boom." And also, Ahkna, none of that psychic shit. "Kaboom, and we're all pushin' up day-glo daisies." War Minister Ahkna, because it's what she says whenever she opens her mouth: "Why do I doubt that?" As in, "You say it's a bomb? You say you have wormhole weapons? I doubt that you do, and now I'm going to kidnap you and make a bioloid duplicate." Why does she doubt that: "Because you lack imagination?" I love John Crichton.

Staleek asks what he wants. "What do I want? What do I want? I have not been chasing my ass all over the galaxy trying to pull out chunks of my brain. I have not been sneaking fembots ["Bringing Home The Beacon"], and [Skreeths](#), into the places where I live. *You* want something! You. *You* want what's inside my head. You want what I know about wormholes. Because I," he says crazily, madly, brightly, bravely, climbing up onto the table and going on a little walk around it, "I can leap tall galaxies in a single bound. I can scorch planets with a wave of my hand." He points to the Scarrans, the Charrids, the Kalish. To Grayza: "And you, *and* you, and you: you can't do jack." Grayza narrows her eyes, but there's pleading in them too, and it's kind of a sad little moment for her. This is a sad little episode for my girl Grayza. "That's. Not. True," she says. Because if it were, the Cold War would be over, and her people

would be overcome forever, and the peace would not only have failed, it would be wiped out. So it's not true, because it can't be true. And that's her whole life, right there. She's more admirable than not, I think; she's in parallel with Sikozu more than anything. Sikozu and Ahkna, of course. She's not Crais or Scorpius 3.0, though she is an insane military commander and she is both powerful and dangerous, but really she's just somebody in a position to get things done. Somebody who put herself into that position. Not out of hate of the Scarrans, like Scorpius, but out of love for Sebaceans. What's worse than a bad bad guy? A good one. Which means, to my mind, that her failures, though they generally do benefit the cast, are not to be celebrated.

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"Oh, really? You command the stars to do your bidding?" He hunkers down in her face: "I know you can't. ...And *you* can't, and you can't. And you won't." Aeryn smiles up at him, at peace by his side even in the middle of this most dangerous room in the universe. "...But I have." Staleek asks why he's even there, then. If he's the superpower they all wanna be, why show up at all? "Because I am an American," he says, as the score goes crazy. "And what does an American want, democracy? *Capitalism!* I want to sell out and settle down. For one day only, it's a blue-light special on aisle three. My wormhole technology and a free set of steak knives for all the tea in China, and anything you can imagine to pay me." Ahkna's like, "'Pay'?" Yes. Cash. The Kalish murmurs, "He's crazy," and Aeryn smiles over at him: "Isn't it fun?" Andy bought me this season for my birthday several years ago and I'm pretty sure it's for that line, so he could rewind it and watch it over and over whenever he liked. "He's crazy!" "Isn't it fun?" John kicks things off the table like he's gone Coyote and welcomes them to his Cold War. "Now, what am I offered for all the powers of the Universe?"

Minister Ahkna, Captain Jenek, and Emperor Staleek are having a beautiful meeting. Ahkna, of course, thinks John's bluffing. I love how she's consistent, but that it's itself consistent with her character. This is a woman whose father was deposed, and one assumes murdered, by Staleek...into whose Cabinet she managed to get herself, and whose ass she is going to brutally kill the very second she can, getting the cycle going again and becoming Empress. And I wish her luck because she represents the kind of determination you see in movies like *Gladiator* -- something I find fairly lacking in the youth of today. "The bomb isn't real and he has nothing to give us. He's come for Scorpius." The voice of Eff You. Jenek is like, "Remember how they're buddies and they're working together, as seen in the last episode?" But Staleek's maybe the best one of them right now, because all he cares about is disarming John's nuclear knob. Jenek grunts and goes running for the info. Staleek's confused about why John would risk so much "just to rescue an ally," which would be even funnier, if he knew the whole story, and Ahkna puts forth the very Ahkna idea that he's working with Grayza to actually prevent Scorpius from giving us wormhole technology. Which, now that she mentions it, seems more probable than anything, and not something you'd ever think about. Even though it's actually closer to the truth than anything else, if you think about it. Staleek is like, "No way," and she points out that it was "Crichton's females" who rescued Grayza. I dare you to call them that in front of them, crazy lady. Staleek's

like, "Right, by the way? That was awesome how you fucked even that up." She leaves, growling, even though they've not concluded their business in any way.

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Rygel eats and Sikozu's got good posture as we go over everything for the race-riot portion of the plan. D'Argo's located all the surveillance devices on the base; Pilot's taken care of the whole comms-interception issue, even though last week that was a problem; John can run around the base being a visual deterrent what with his nuclear knob, which, come on, he's nicknamed Fat Man. I guess there's a downside to every relationship no matter how perfect the guy seems on paper. We've all got our little Fat Man trapdoors you don't find out until after you're in love. It's romantic, in a way. Aeryn tosses off a "you all know the plan, of course," which is a clumsy retro-engineered way to get the plan expositied...but not as clumsy as having Noranti go, "Ooh, I do? I mean, I don't." What's the point of all that? Chiana does jump over her head onto the table, which is a nice random little distraction, and she goes, "Wrinkles..." like "Come on," but it's still lazy writing. Rygel's got the Charrids, which is interesting, considering he has a whole hatred issue with them anyway, but maybe that's the point: it's either that he's got himself under control thanks to Katoya, or just that he knows Charrids best, or that hate makes you a better manipulator, or something else I am not thinking of. Sikozu's got the Kalish, Noranti's on Recon (*fabulous*), and Noranti supplies the last ingredient, pointing at John: "Peacekeepers!"

Aeryn and John just walk right the hell into Commandant Grayza's office on the Command Carrier. I love this season! "A peace conference with the Emperor? Very brave of you to enter Scarran space." Braca nods at them and follows them in, also "commending" them on their "bravery." Grayza just looks him in the eye: "John Crichton, do not destroy the Sebacean people." Which you have to admit, as an opening conversation gambit, is pretty solid. He tells her she's doing fine with that on her own, and she points out the basically true fact that everything she's done has been "calculated to gain peace." It's not so much that she believes the lie, it's that it's not so much a lie. Which is an ugly truth about politics that nobody likes to think about: everybody's got a plan and an agenda and a bunch of people backing them up. Crazies like Hitler are way rare, but if you think like a hammer, Grayza starts looking like a nail. Again: she's not there for revenge, which means her peace is sanctified and her intentions are good. Even when she fucks it up: "So you betrayed the Luxans? Maybe you should check your math." Yeah. Grayza's not really feeling that as a conversational topic, though: "Give us wormhole weapons and everyone will be safe."

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John turns to Aeryn: "Didn't she say she already had that?" And Aeryn nods, disingenuously. Grayza would roll her eyes, if she weren't being sincere: "We are very, very close. You know that we have sent Prowlers into wormholes. If I can buy peace, even for an arn or two, perhaps we can develop them." John makes a good point, which is that what comes after peace is invariably more expansion: "And what will you do? Kill billions of your rivals? Hey, maybe kill *us*." He turns over three silver cups and begins a game of Find The Lady. The only game he can ever win. "Then name your price, Crichton. Anything that you can imagine." He tells her that's the rub, and then explains crowd-sourcing: "See, I can't figure a way out of this situation. But the first

side that does, wins." He slides the three cups toward Grayza. Her move. And I agree with him, but there's also something to the fact that Grayza and Ahkna are both...doing the best they can. Which is a lot closer to the real world than, say, Darth Vader and whatever his plan is that I still don't understand, or Scorpius's plan which is based on being a child of rape, or Crais's plan of going "ARRRGH!" all the time. Crazy dictators happen, sure. But most of us are just trying our best, and that's why I like this Cold War so much: this episode could have been called "Nixon In China." (Well, since it's *Farscape* it would be more like "Sorry Bush Barfed On You, China," but remember when we didn't demonize and dehumanize our political enemies for ratings and the FOX News bourgeois theatre? Remember what it felt like *not* being a hair-trigger puppet of hatred and capitalist hegemony? Do our memories even go back that far any more? Stewardship, not possession, is the meaning of power. All else is arrogance and bullying. It's a lot harder to stomach these kind of context issues when the episodes are so much more recent.)

Outside *Lo'La*, Jenek's explaining to a soldier that the Moyans have negotiated their way onto the base for real and that they have access and free movement. Not bad, Fat Man. Chiana appears and approaches Jenek, whom she last saw when he had her tied to a table, about to take away her most basic bodily freedoms. After she so recently got herself back in one piece. This scene is essential if you know where to look: seems random, really not. She's not smarting off, she's taking back what's hers. "Let me ask you somethin'. You short-faced Scarrans, you all look alike, you know? But, uh, were you...were you, uh, down, down on the border station?" He says he was. "Then you were the one that ordered Aeryn and me to be cut open." He nods, and she laughs. Not happily. "Yeah, I got another one for you: Do Scarrans have mivonks?" She kicks them in their designated place, bruising her foot on bone and armor, and goes down, clutching her knee. "Yes, but they're not external." The Scarran soldier turns away, laughing.

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A Charrid officer in some lounge, telling a story about what a frelling "hapooda" this Kalish is. I think that "hapooda" means "trek" but I'm not sure. Could mean he kisses dudes, except I don't think so, based on a later use. D'Argo walks into the Charrid lounge and immediately calls them stenchy bastards, then stares around for a sec. "The Scarrans have nothing decent to drink, and I *won't* drink with the Kalish. Got any Raslak?" Start with an insult so they think you're hardcore, then imply that Kalish are hapoodas, and you're in. The officer points to a seat and D'Argo joins them. There's a passed-out Charrid sitting at the table; D'Argo pushes him onto the floor and starts sowing the seeds of racism.

A long-haired Kalish walks with a Charrid into a control room shaped like the inside of the [TARDIS](#) with lots of awesome curves and balconies for later. Lots of Kalish standing around, a flight of stairs in the center, PA scratching out Scarran. Sikozu steps out before an older, official-looking Kalish: "Secretary Vakali?" He asks what she's about, given that the area's restricted, and she tells him the Charrids are going to expel the Kalish from Katratzi by force. Vakali asks how she knows this, especially since she's wrong, and she just inclines her head: "Just like you, I am a devoted Kalish." Vakali points out that without the Kalish doing all the administration, the Scarran system of government would collapse, and walks off. She grabs his sleeve:

"What if they fear you will take it away from them? Please, Secretary. We need to talk." The younger dude tells Vakali he's "too prominent" to be seen with Sikoze, and offers to talk to her. The Secretary takes off, and Sikoze sighs. How you gonna start a riot if nobody shows up for it?

D'Argo groans and coughs and drinks, sympathizing with the Charrids' treatment by the Scarrans. The officer wipes his mouth with his hand and asks what D'Argo wants. "Me? I've got what I want." They laugh at him: "You enjoy traveling with a group of thieves and a Hynerian slug?" He responds that he's banking, so yeah. The Charrids pay attention, and he indicates his "employer," played by Rygel the Slug. One of them laughs, "What is this? Dinner?" and Rygel looks at them regally. "This is opportunity." Fear and money: Kalish and Charrids. And without them, and the flowers, what are Scarrans? Nothing at all. This is the truth about authority, of course, but also about reliance on subjugate nations: they will go Afghanistan on your ass so fast once there's money and fear in the equation.

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Sikoze follows the young Kalish around the control room as he fusses and futzes. "You will submit identification details before we can process a background analysis," he says, and Sikoze tells him to shove it. "You can trust me as I am, or I am gone." She looks deeply into his eyes, and debuts her new power for this week. Only it's not a power so much as it is a really upsetting thing she can do: turn her left eyeball all the way around in its socket to reveal a golden cat's eye marble on the backside. He's startled, she flips it back around again: "Now, what of *your* background?" He looks around shiftily, then does the same thing. She sighs, and leans forward, her forehead on his, so much more intimate than sex, and tells you she's home. "How many other bioloids are here?" He tells her he's the one resistance member to infiltrate the base, and she asks how much hatred is there between the Charrids and Kalish: "Even more than the outer worlds; there's more at stake. Bigger egos." She nods. "Then I will be straight with you: we want to ignite that hatred and we want to use it as a cover for our escape. Will you help us?"

First of all, he's cute but not Karohm cute. He's like if instead of *Supernatural* DNA you had *Roswell* DNA in there. Secondly: the hell? Third, or maybe 2A: Sikoze's a robot? How come nobody told me Sikoze was a robot? So just to keep this straight: She's a bioengineered being of a slave race who's working with an underground resistance to free the Kalish from Scarran control. And that's why all the powers. Also: she is awesome. Also as well? We haven't even begun to crack her cover stories. Or her hair issues. (Strega : John's Hair :: Jacob : Sikoze's Hair in the *Peacekeeper Wars*. If you haven't noticed that yet.)

John and Aeryn get scanned by a Scarran DRD; 1812 shoos it away at John's request. If the DRDs are Moya's immune system, 1812 is John's personal histamine bodyguard. "That's a good boy." Aeryn wonders if Grayza's figured it out yet -- "Don't think so, she still looks pretty damned stressed" -- and notes that High Command is going to break her open if she doesn't come home with a peace treaty. John's not really invested in that: "I reckon." Aeryn nods at Fat Man: "As long as your stress levels are all right." John says his stress level is manageable, especially "considering the fact that we're now nuclear terrorists." (*Complete the thought!*) He stands behind Aeryn, smells her hair. "Bomb seems to think I'm okay." "Provided that thing's

working," Aeryn says, looking at his face and then down at his knob, which is now beginning to beep faster and louder, and also light up. John's sheepish: "It's working." They laugh quietly and he leans into her. It goes louder. John: "Uh oh. You are dangerous." She shoves him back playfully: "Well, you better keep away then."

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Emperor Staleek walks down a corridor, led by his armor knob and followed by Ahkna. Jenek steps up with a good scan of the bomb. "Sire...decoding it could take some time." Staleek tells him that's not exactly true, should Jenek "expect to prosper," and just keeps walking. The Emperor and Ahkna join John and Aeryn in the war room. "Couldn't figure a way to disarm my bomb, huh?" John sits at the edge of the table; Staleek offers him some more of the red blossoms that are in every room on Katratzi: "Refreshment?" John spits out the spiky red petal immediately, and Staleek and Ahkna grin: "Crystherium Utilia. An acquired taste." John calls it "streletzia hummingbird feeder" and picks it out of his teeth. He then fucks up majorly. "Bird of Paradise? Yeah. Mom's garden. Dime a dozen. Did you come all this way to discuss botany?" Staleek's jaw nearly drops but nobody sees him before his composure is back: Aeryn completes the sentence: "Or to make an offer?" Ahkna, as usual, calls bullshit: "Have you got anything to offer, or is all this just an elaborate bluff?" I bet Ahkna is just *ridiculous* about customer-service issues.

"Did you really lose my luggage? *Or is this an elaborate bluff?*"

"Did you not hear me say 'no mayo'? *Or is this just an elaborate bluff?*"

"I might be interested in a timeshare at Vail...*unless this is an elaborate bluff!*"

"Is that a nuclear bomb in your pocket, or are you *lying about having wormhole weapons?*"

John's like, "For *real* you don't think I can control wormholes? Because you totally stole my girlfriend and somebody's baby on the off chance, and you've got Scorpius Aurora'd but good on the off chance, and you haven't shot me in the face on the off chance, and the Peacekeepers are running all over your highly guarded secret base being rude to the waiters -- also on the off chance -- so like, for *real?*" Staleek's like, "Need proof." John and Aeryn, slickly, have just the patter prepared for this. Aeryn slides a data chip across the table to the Emperor, and John says they can meet him halfway. "Navigational data chip," Aeryn explains. "Local star chart. Send a ship to the designated coordinates, and let us know when they arrive." Ahkna asks, "Why?" and Aeryn tells her. "Proof." John starts to go wild again: "Command performance: we're gonna put on the wormhole show, just for you." Neither of them touches the chip, so John grabs it back again and offers to show it to somebody more interested. Like Grayza. Because Staleek is like a really, really tall fifth-grader, he is cowed by this maneuver, and takes the chip. He and Ahkna bounce, leaving John and Aeryn standing in the war room. Aeryn is wearing the biggest smile you've ever seen.

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Emperor Staleek immediately dispatches a Stryker to the coordinates, via Captain Jenek, and asks if they've done any checking up on "Crichton's ship," *Lo'La*. I love how Jenek is like the go-to guy for everything, but I'm sure it's a flag officer kind of situation where Jenek's literally the ranking guy currently on Katratzi, so he kind of is. Jenek admits that *Lo'La*'s force field is still impenetrable, but they're trying to override it. Staleek, ever hopeful, tells him to totally override it, and then check its logs and star

charts and whatever else. Ahkna, predictably: "This is folly! Crichton plainly knows nothing about wormholes!" Staleek's like, "For once could you turn that gimlet eye back on your own giant stovepipe hat? You've been torturing Scorpius this whole time and anybody who's ever seen this show knows that wormholes are like the one thing he doesn't have under control. For somebody who hates maybes and thinks every yes is a maybe, you sure do love beating up that old perv." Ahkna's like, "I question even his zero knowledge about wormholes! Such are my powers of doubting!" She then runs off to torture him some more.

Scorpius drools; Ahkna commends him on his resilience, and he laughs through his drool that it's probably his Scarran genes making him awesome. Ahkna laughs, and he offers to trade places with her for a bit and find out. "How would you like to punish me?" she says, all 1-900-SLUT-GIRL, and Scorpius is like, "Give me an hour and you'll find out." I don't know if she's kidding or what. I do know that she's hilarious: "Oh, I *wish* we had more *time*. But what I need to know now is, what you do know about wormholes." That's the best line she says, but Scorpius is right there with her: "Well, torture me! And I will amuse myself with dreams of you." He does the tongue thing at her again. It's not *quite* as sexy as he seems to think, although mostly that's because he looks like a bedsore with frostbite, even on a good day. "Kill me and my knowledge dies with me," he grunts at her. But she questions even life and death with aplomb!

"Are you sure? Even if an old friend helped you to the other side?" Scorpius coughs and she steps to the side, revealing..."Stark!" Scorpius gasps, blown away. The thing about Stark right now is that he's got hair down to the collar, and it makes him like ten times even hotter than he was before. However, he is also being pretty normal. He's a pretty normal guy: "There's no way to escape, Scorpius. Not even into death. Because as you're making your agonizing passage to the other side..." He lifts his mask; brilliant golden light falls on Scorpius's face. He begins to scream and strangle. This is perversion. I don't like this at all. I want some answers. Stark: "...I am going to capture your soul, and with it everything you know." The light shines brighter and brighter, as Scorpius screams silently. Now in terms of Grasshopper's karma, he kinda went there first, as far as abusing the stykera state for his own purposes. Even if they were good purposes for bad reasons, it was still fuckin' creepy. But this...*my* Stark doesn't do this stuff. Not even to...hell, *especially* not to Scorpius. Let me tell you I was livid.

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Around the scenery, after the commercial, Stark gets us the backstory from Season One. "Oh! I've waited many cycles for this, Scorpius. Dreamed so many sleepless dreams. Every dashed hope, every plunge into terrified despair, that I suffered at your hands in the Aurora Chair." We even get a helpful flashback of him screaming this one time. The light continues to shine, Scorpius shooting spittle all over the place as Ahkna watches. There are visual clues to the fact that we're seeing a parallel reversal here. And yeah, every season ends with goodbyes, but also a trip into the Lion's Den. So there's a poetic necessity to get Scorpius into the Chair, even if it's a different chair, and I guess having Stark here is a good shorthand for that, but I was creeped out by it because it not only cheapens Stark's actual character into incomprehensibility, but also shits again on the Banik stykera, and also on Zhaan herself: this is not the man she loved, nor is this my Stark. Not even Scorpius would

make him go this way. I was horrified! I went all Ahkna Hell No on this part! "But rather than the two cycles that fate gave you to screw with my soul, she's only given me two arms to be finished with you. So, I guess I better be a little more imaginative." A soldier enters as Scorpius screams and chokes; Ahkna tells the soldier this seems to be a good idea. Scorpius jerks and drools and screams.

Noranti drags Chiana by the hand to a vent in the wall, and makes her listen: "That's Scorpius." It's so low-tech, I love that. Like, we're going to engineer this whole race riot and do all this stuff and turn the lights on and off and all, but they end up actually locating Scorpius because Granny was walking down a hallway. That's awesome.

Chiana sends Noranti off to tell Crichton, while she tries to find out more. Well, I guess Noranti was on "recon," so maybe it's not just a coincidence. Still funny, though.

Noranti heads over to John and Aeryn's room (John and Aeryn's room!) and they discuss Scorpius further. Noranti worries that he'll break soon, and Aeryn allows the possibility that he might have already broken. John comms for Rygel, and is ignored -- Rygel's workin' the Charrids all about how they could be rich if they worked for him -- so finally D'Argo's like, "He's busy, John." John comms Sikozeu in the control room, and she tells him it's all going to plan. "Plan's too slow. Speed things up, please."

D'Argo and Sikozeu, on both ends of the Riot That Isn't Yet, are doing their best. "I'll need some time," Sikozeu says as she watches the Kalish, and Aeryn grumbles. "Why do we never have enough time?"

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One Charrid officer asks why he should switch to Rygel when he's already a general in the Scarran service, and Rygel drops the bomb that the Scarrans will soon sever all ties with the Charrids. Another Charrid calls him a lying slug: "They're going to war with the Peacekeepers!" But not, Rygel says, with Charrid allies. Just the Kalish. One of them laughs at him and it's funny: "The Kalish are just Techs." D'Argo says -- bringing us back to the beginning, the long way around -- that since the Scarrans are building a wormhole weapon, they need Techs more than soldiers. In the future, techs and soldiers will be the same thing, but the Charrids aren't quick enough to be both. It's taken us four years to get there. And, Rygel adds, the Kalish know this: "They're planning to sabotage the Charrids by embarrassing you in front of the Scarrans." The officer jumps up in Rygel's face and says they'd never be so bold, but Rygel laughs that Charrids are as stupid as the Kalish say. "Join me before the Scarrans throw you off this rock." Money for fear.

The Kalish functionary, Vakali, chats with Captain Jenek in front of a red schematic projection of the Fat Man. "All just spare parts mostly," Vakali says, and isn't it the truth, "salvaged from devices I've never seen before." Jenek says he doesn't care if it's made out of Vakali's mother's bones, he wants it disarmed. Vakali asks for a few days and Jenek gets up his nose: "You don't have them! Either you'll disarm it now, or I'll find some species that will." Jenek growls in his face and leaves; Vakali worries at the younger Kalish assistant, who wows. Just like Sikozeu said! It is, like, *scary* how easy it is to start a race riot.

John and Aeryn bust ass down a corridor, with Chiana now. She's located Scorpius "somewhere on this level," helpfully, and Aeryn redirects her efforts: if they can't make it to *Lo'La*, they're going to need alternate escape routes. "To the surface?" Mmmm, Aeryn says, and Chiana takes off. John and Aeryn head into the Emperor's chamber,

where Staleek is royally pissed. "You have cost me a Stryker and its crew!" John's like, wha? "How did I do that?" Staleek accuses the wormhole of eating them, but John knows better, and gets frustrated: "What did you do? Do not tell me you ordered them into the wormhole! She told you to call us when they got there!" Staleek yells right back that John should have warned him, and John's like, actually not my problem. On the other hand, "You wanted proof, you got it." Heh. Staleek asks if he actually opened the wormhole and John -- instead of admitting it's art and not science -- tells him no more freebies. "You wanna do a deal, or you want me to sell it to the Peacekeepers, so they can gobble up all of your warships?" Staleek does not respond well to threats; poorly enough that John and Aeryn step back. "I'm not threatening. I'm just a guy with something to sell. You don't want to buy it, I'm sure someone else will." They walk backwards, out, as he growls. The door closes in front of them, and John asks her if he pushed too hard. She shakes her head. "He'll make an offer."

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Sikozu and the young Resistance Kalish walk together down a hall, and they are talking about Birds of Paradise. "An entire cavern just to grow the flowers they eat?" Kalish kid is like, "I know, right? And nobody's allowed in there." A Charrid soldier exits an elevator; the Kalish and Sikozu get in. The guy presses buttons. How come? "We don't know; but only the Charrids are supposed to have the access codes. So if anyone else enters the cavern, the Scarrans will assume the Charrids left it accessible. Like...this." He pushes two buttons at once, and the elevator doors close with a clank. He's stolen the codes. Which, of course, the Charrids will figure out, and then they'll confront the Kalish. Fear and money. Sikozu comms to John: "We've found a much faster way to incite a riot."

"Great, let me hear it. Later." John's all over the place: More riot! Less riot! More talking! Shut up! But this time it's for good reason: John and Aeryn are about to run into somebody we love. "Nice pants," John says to a passing Peacekeeper, and they both stop a few steps later. "Hey, Braca. You look a little lost." Braca won't look at them. "Does Mommy know you're here?" asks Aeryn, and John stage-whispers, "Does Mommy know he's Scorpius's boy?" Braca's eyes go wild and he walks back to them, quietly. "Oh, no! Mommy *doesn't* know!" He faces them down, stares into John's eyes: "Are you here to rescue him or kill him?" Man, I love Braca. This is the weirdest love quadrangle in the entire universe. Let's review: A robot cheerleader with magic powers, a whore-gland Commandant, a corpse in a bondage outfit, and...Miklo Braca. Half of whom *barely rate as supporting cast*. This is what's going on *in the background*.

Similarly, you've got Ahkna, Stark, and Scorpius, another torture-related whole thing I don't actually understand but always seems to have a certain creepy sex component. Stark's frelling Scorpius over and over again, sputter and spit and scream, when the lights go out. Ahkna tells Stark to get hidden, and John and Aeryn enter the room. "We're here to see Scorpius," John says, flashing knob at the guards. Ahkna tells him he -- but not Aeryn -- can come in. Aeryn nods, and John comes all the way in, toward Scorpius. "John," Scorpius says, gazing up at him. "Grasshopper," says John, looking down on Scorpius in his extremity: his head hangs, he pants and sweats. He's not in control of this. John looks from Aeryn, to Scorpius, to Ahkna, heading down off the platform toward her. "That's a nice hat." She thanks him with a heat breath; he goes to

his knees. Aeryn yells at her to cut it out but the guard grabs her. "What did you say? 'Too happy, too sad, too cold, too hot'? Let's see, hmm?" She is now doubting John's physical responses to simple stimuli. She is so hardcore! Fat Man beeps louder and louder and its lights pulse faster and faster, and John struggles under her probe.

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"I know you have a real nuclear device," she says, "but I'm sure you can disarm it." He groans, wiped: "I would, but I can't. So...I won't." Aeryn pulls but can't get free. "You're bluffing," Ahkna broken-records some more, and John grins as the beeping goes crazy. "So much for nuclear deterrence. Get ready to kiss your ass good-bye, Castro." She keeps him heat-breathed, the bomb going faster and faster and faster, about to blow...and then she lets him go. He falls on his face. Ahkna pronounces him insane, which: you think?, and tells the guards to let Aeryn go free. She grunts over to John and picks him up off the floor. She asks him if he's all right and calls him "mad." "Just played a game of chicken. Did I win?" She's not entirely convinced they're doing the right thing: "Just. *This* time." He groans that next time she can take the initiative, and she is so awesome: "Frell it." She decides to take the initiative immediately, and starts towards Scorpius. John grabs her, begging not to start the ruckus just yet. She breaks off, walks out of the torture room, and John follows, glaring at Ahkna. Scorpius drools spit, leaning forward in the torture device. So close!

Sikozu whines that they actually found him and then just left him there, but John assures her that it's just not time yet. "That's why we're here," he says, indicating the elevator. A couple of Charrids get out and John wishes them a good morning. He is brutally rebuffed. Sikozu hurries onto the elevator, Aeryn and John behind. "As long as this helps start the conflict," Aeryn says, and Sikozu's like, oh totally: "Might even get yourselves killed." She presses the controls and stuff and John smiles: "Then we'll all go together." He waves goodbye to Sikozu as the elevator doors shut. Alone in the corridor, she shakes her head: "Good luck."

John and Aeryn stare at each other in the elevator. "Give me your hand. Put it on my shoulder." He puts a hand on her waist: "Come here." She smiles, her hands in his. "All right, now stand on my feet." She laughs and groans, looking down at their feet together. "Comfortable?" he asks, and she smiles. He nods at her, and begins to waltz. "Hold tight." Aeryn laughs, looking up at him in wonder, and puts her head down on his shoulder, smiling quietly, as they dance in the silence.

Rygel smokes from the hookah with the Charrids, who are still doubting that, Kalish or not, the Scarrans would ever drop their partnership with the Charrids. Rygel draws on the pipe, then coughs and laughs; D'Argo asks what partnership. "You aren't their partners. You're nothing more than ill-paid, ill-treated," Rygel pauses and sniffs, "ill-smelling servants." One of the Charrids growls and pulls a knife on him; D'Argo quickly urges a rethink on that one, grabbing him.

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Aeryn's head is still safe on John's shoulder as the elevator door finally opens. "Is this our floor?" he asks, leaning against the door and looking out. "Don't know," she replies. "Have to get out and have a look around." He follows her. In every scene where the Fat Man matters, where bluster matters -- in every scene that is a lie -- Aeryn follows John, a step or two behind. Every scene that matters, every time they're alone, every time they're actually getting shit done that doesn't involve appearing

some crazy way, Aeryn's in front. There's one perfect image in *The Peacekeeper Wars*, where two people in love, with their arms around each other, each aim their guns forward: protecting the six and knowing beyond a shadow of doubt that the other one's got things covered. They use it in *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* too, actually, that symbol. It's so neat. To see these kids who strive so hard and keep getting the hell beat out of them, suddenly -- after giving away everything that means anything, after sacrificing even unto what makes them who they are -- suddenly working in a balletic synchronicity, an abrupt click into place that is as beautiful, and graceful, as it is simple, and full of grace. It starts here, on Katratzi; it's just Plato, telling you to fall in love and mean it. Facing forward, facing back; leading or following. My side, your side: love gives you all the sides and every angle. Katratzi never stood a chance.

D'Argo's holding the Charrid's knife down when the alarm sounds: intruder alert in the Crysterium chamber." Guess it was the right floor after all; Aeryn and John walk down into a room full of Birds of Paradise. Something lovely and organic, in a shiny black room like that, gives me the creeps. This episode really works every angle it can, with the flowers. The simple fact that the Scarrans eat beauty, even if we don't know it yet. The light shining down on the field from above. A huge bloom opposite, against the wall. "Never knew Scarrans were so sentimental," John says, and they walk down into the flowers. He picks one, and wonders when the soldiers will come. She works her way back to him: "What do you want to do, to get noticed?" They laugh, as he pulls her down into the flowers: "Got arrested once. College. Let me show ya."

Split-second later, a group of armed Charrids hurry off the elevator, yelling to get the hell out of the flowers. John's whispered "damn" is heard from the field, and then they stand up. Aeryn blows her hair out of her face and straightens her clothes; John zips his pants back up. John says quietly, once again, "There's never enough time." They put their jackets back on and roll their eyes.

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Staleek noshes on Crysterium Utilia, distractedly, as Ahkna paces behind him. Staleek demands of John and Aeryn where the codes came from. "Codes? We didn't need no stinking codes," John growls, and Aeryn turns her head to look at him. Ahkna protests -- since this is clearly an *elaborate bluff* -- that they couldn't have gotten into that particular and *obviously hugely important* cavern without the codes. "We didn't try to access anything. Some Charrids got off the elevator, we got on, we got off. Well, we tried to get off. We got interrupted." Ahkna asks him which Charrids, and Aeryn laughs in her face: "Are you serious? They all look alike." He tells her she should put numbers on their uniforms, and Staleek takes the opportunity to bitch at Ahkna about how the Charrid troops are her responsibility. She very smartly gets the hell out of there, promising a full inquiry.

The door closes behind her and Staleek hisses. John turns to him brightly: "You know, while you're at it, give me Scorpius." Just like that. Heh. Staleek's like, "How come? Because he's totally about to give up your secrets to the torture, even though so far no dice?" John shakes his head: "No, because the hat lady is pissing me off, and I wanna piss her off. Tit for tat. Call it a whim. And, I don't like watching people be tortured who don't know anything." It's very interesting, because in fact Ahkna didn't really do anything that shitty to John in this scene, but she sure is A) pissing *Staleek*

off, and B) sure does seem to be getting nowhere with Scorpius. So really, the translation of what John just said is, "No, because the hat lady is pissing you off, and it would be fun to piss her off. Tit for tat. Call it my whim, not yours, and besides, we both know she's an idiot and paranoid and a naysayer, and Scorpius doesn't know anything. Don't we?" Because John is often awesome, and understands how to work The Man.

Stark caresses Scorpius's chin. "What do you know about wormholes, Scorpius? Tell me." He says he knows nothing, and Stark calls him a liar, and hits him with some stykera heat. "I said I know nothing! Know nothing!" Ahkna watches. Finally he sags forward in the chair. Stark approaches her, wriggling like a dog. "It's a normal part of the procedure. He's strong. Very strong. That means, when he finally breaks, it'll be all the more catastrophic." Fat Man stuff. Ahkna begins to threaten him, but he reminds her of his exact promise: only that he would break Scorpius. "Not that he knows anything, but if he does, you will know." Is this the hating of Stark that so many have claimed to suffer? Has it finally struck another victim? It is painful, yet exhilarating.

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Emperor Staleek comes in and calls total bullshit on Ahkna's activities. "You wanted the information taken from him!" she protests, and he points at what's left of Scorpius, which is like a stain with drool coming out of it: "Alive! I said alive! And have you learned anything?" Nope. He tells her to shut it: "Crichton has destroyed a Stryker and found a way into the caverns, but you have achieved: nothing. Get out!" That's pretty hilarious when you put it that way, actually. She claims the torture chamber as her jurisdiction, and he reminds her that that's his prerogative. He sends both her and frigging Stark out, and the Scarran soldiers follow. Staleek gives himself a pep talk about getting the truth and approaches Scorpius. "I thought you said she couldn't harm you." Scorpius is...amazing. You can barely hear him with the strangled voice, and yet. Amazing. "She couldn't! I'm *fine*, quite fine. I've caused enough harm in my time to mimic it well." Ha! Staleek's like, "Meanwhile John's knob is scaring everybody, and also he ate some of us with a wormhole." Scorpius claims that he can separate John from the Fat Man -- which, think about that a second, because he's not wrong -- because John trusts him more than he realizes. Staleek's like, that would be so awesome. Unless you totally betray me because he's your friend. Staleek grabs Scorpius, who smiles at him. "I've served you for ten cycles as a spy. Why would I betray you now?" I'm so confused. Is Wentrask real? Did we know Scorpius was totally a Scarran spy? There are three people in this show that I can't remember their actual deal even when they just say it out loud. He's one of them. I mean, I'm pretty sure I know his actual deal, but who can say if it's true? *The Peacekeeper Wars* is like doing a Magic Eye after six tabs of acid about that stuff. "Betray me, and you will die in this machine. But deliver Crichton's knowledge to me, and all the power you seek will be yours." Scorpius pants and sweats and watches Staleek leave with some *righteous* hate in his face. He is so smooth.

A PK ship comes to Katratzi with something very interesting, as we see when Commandant Grayza invites John and Aeryn to her office. "I would like to make an addition to my offer." She hands John an official-looking plastic film with some kind of PK seal on it. "I'll have the kung pao chicken. You want a spring roll?" he asks Aeryn, holding the sheet out for Aeryn to read. "Actually," Grayza says, "they're a pardon

from the Supreme Council. No Peacekeeper would dare violate them." John asks if it's true, and Aeryn stares at the films. "It would seem so... However, it is conditional." On not sharing wormhole tech with the Scarrans. Which is such a dumb idea that I couldn't blame them for hunting John down if he did. "What if we give these back?" Aeryn says they'll stay valid; not even Grayza would destroy them after signature. Braca: "I've witnessed them. So have all our principal officers." John lays them on her desk and says he'll let her know.

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Two armed and armored Charrid soldiers drag Scorpius, gagging and moaning, down a corridor. John and Aeryn comm to the rest of the crew that Scorpius is on the move. "One riot, well done, hold the mayo...now!"

Sikozu watches a Scarran soldier getting weird with a Charrid officer in the Kalish Command Center, with the Secretary nearby, and tells John they're close. "Your troops compromised the security of the cavern!" and lots of protesting and bitching and whatnot. "This ain't horseshoes, or hand grenades. Now means now!" The Emperor enters, beautiful, Scorpius in chains behind him. "A bargain is struck. However, an agreement requires trust, which thus far has been one-sided. Now, you tell me what else you really want." Aeryn walks over to Scorpius, who has been dropped on a table, spitting and frothing and moaning.

"When you wake up in the morning, on your big Emperor bed, and you listen. What do you hear?" John circles around to stand with Aeryn. "Do you hear the little Emperor birdies singing outside your window? Do you hear the Emperor wind, whistling through the trees?" He stares the Emperor down. "Or do you hear people dying? Do you hear your friends begging for mercy? Do you hear doors being kicked in, because people are hunting you? Do you hear the sound of your heart, pounding in your ears?" His hands are calm, his bearing is strong. "What I want, Santy Claus... For the rest of my life, I wanna wake up like an Emperor." Staleek: "Your safety, guaranteed. In just a few arns." John scoffs: "Bill Gates can't guarantee Windows, how you gonna guarantee my safety?" Staleek shows teeth. "With great effort, and great sincerity." Before he turns to go, he sets the clock ticking: "Though at some point, my largesse will dissipate."

John and Aeryn look at each other. On the table, Scorpius gasps his appreciation, and John hisses down: "My ass." He grabs Scorpius, furious, and screams in his face. "Did you tell them?" Scorpius says no; John continues to act nuts. "Wormholes, my brain, Harvey. What did you tell them?" John puts his hand on Scorpius's throat as he's swearing he said nothing. "Listen up. I am Johnny Radiation because of you, Nosferatu. Everyone I care about west of the Moon is here, and in danger, to make sure that you keep your mouth shut. Now! Did you keep your mouth shut?" Aeryn gets worried. Scorpius promises again, and turns away, panting. John asks, as he's gagging, if she believes him. Of course she does. She knows how slippery this gets for John, and she's stepping in, watching his six.

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"Good. Kill him and let's go." He drops Scorpius back, onto the table, and Scorpius opens eyes and mouth wide. "What?" John shrugs at Aeryn: "Kill him and let's go." Aeryn gapes at him. "We came here to *free* him." No, John clarifies: "We came here to make sure that my knowledge didn't slip out of his mouth. Kill him, Aeryn, and let's

go." She considers him: "Oh, you want *me* to kill him?" And John's like, "I'm not the assassin here." She shakes her head, unhappy with all this. "If you want him to die, you can kill him yourself." John says she made him promise otherwise, and on his request she releases him from that promise twice. He thanks her, and pulls Winona on Scorpius's face. And waits. And stands, with the gun pointing down.

So this is happening on like six levels simultaneously. Let's work backwards. Aeryn's vow of protection, for Scorpius; John's corresponding vow; Scorpius's protection of John. Aeryn and John's unquestionable concern for each other. It's a triangle of mutually assured protection but also taint, and Aeryn brought that into their bed, and she did this thing wearing a coldsuit, and bearing secrets and mysterious babies. It's no coincidence that John brought up her assassination history: he's not talking about Velorek, he's talking about Harvey's Lovely Daughter. She releases him from this vow, this darkness she's introduced into his relationship, as she waves away the last of the secrets that stand between them. We know, although John still doesn't (although he *um* totally does), that she's only ever loved John. That the dark time is her propaganda and the ghost of her fear, and that she's tired of its weight. Getting bored with it. She's done the work necessary to enter into this relationship naked, no secrets and no armor, and so has he. No more Scorpius, no more Harvey, no more coy dancing around the baby, the physical and vulgar truths about it all. He can beg her for permission to shoot Scorpius in the head, and she'll give it again and again, but the universe laughs at him for asking her to do it herself. She already did. And while she was doing it? He was basically sleeping with Scorpius. Letting him in far enough that he earned himself a Harvey; a Harvey that asks, as he always does, to put Scorpius before Aeryn herself. Shoot him for you? No. As long as we didn't know who the father was, as long as we didn't know what Aeryn was up to, that baby was just Harvey in another form. She gave everything she had, and more, for that baby. Be a man.

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"I'll give you my bike if you kill him," John whines, and Scorpius clears his throat: "May I speak?" They simultaneously say "No," without thinking about it -- she even waves her hand at him distractedly, looking into John's eyes. And he shakes his head. "He's tellin' the truth. We'll sort you out later." John holsters Winona; Scorpius falls back onto the table. How much of that was theatre? How much was an elaborate bluff? "I apologize in advance for any incivility or insensitivity on my part," says John on comms, "but it is beer o'clock. Where the hell is my riot?"

The Scarran tells the Charrid that there are logs showing a Charrid lieutenant having just returned from the cavern; the Charrid points at the Secretary: "Kalish documentation." Vakali walks over and asks what he's implying. Rygel giggles -- "Oooh, you're going to get it" -- and the Charrid says he's "implying" that the intruders couldn't have gotten into the caverns by themselves: somebody must have given John and Aeryn the codes. Vakali protests this "baseless accusation" and the Scarran soldier grabs them *both* by the lapels. "Find out where the fault does lie. I expect a full account from each side in less than two arns." He growls and releases them, walking away, and the Charrid splits from the Secretary to start shit: "Tear down the system to the foundation, find the leak," says the Charrid, and he runs back to Vakali: "You will not destroy my relationship with the Emperor." Vakali's like, "Um, WTF? This is a

security issue?" They talk about how useless the security Charrids are, and the Charrid's like, yeah: "Ordering biscuits and repairing urinals has never won a war." Which, Vakali points out, the Charrids have also never done. Snap! He grabs him by the throat and holds him in the air, and calls him a hapooda -- "and I bet not a very good one" -- and apparently that's enough. I'm enough innately competitive that my second thought is, like, "Am I a good hapooda? Should I be practicing something? But what?" and then I'm like, "Gross. Chances are: No."

I had no idea race riots were this much fun, right, but that's when everything goes nuts and everybody starts shooting at everybody else. Which is thrilling, but remember also please that these are *Kalish*, so they're shooting at people from the walls and the ceiling and standing at difficult angles and climbing around quick as a flash. It's tremendously exciting. The Scarran comes back in like, "A race riot! Hell no," and starts whining into the PA. Rygel comms to John: "Now, leave now. And never doubt your Dominar again." Yes! This is so awesome. Everybody shooting! All the people screaming all over! Guns and explosions! Sikozeu kicks some people through a fucking wall! Sikozeu goes to her bioloid buddy and they put their hands on each other's forearms and say sho-kana-sho to each other and he tells her to run, so she does.

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Ahkna hurries up all, "We've been sabotaged! Or something similar, but not exactly! The Charrids and Kalish are fighting, unless it is all an elaborate ruse!" and Staleek immediately comms for them to secure John. Ahkna corrects him: "You mean Scorpius, right? That guy I keep torturing? He's the one we have to grab. I'm not even positive that John Crichton exists." Staleek's like, "Scorpius isn't going anywhere." (She's like, "Anywhere doesn't exist! But he might be going there! With wormhole knowledge!") Staleek offers her a fucking fistful of spikes from the snack bowl. "Please don't talk again until you've had a grip of Crysterium Utilia and gotten over your pissing match with reality.")

Aeryn and John hurry through a doorway, Scorpius supported between them. John tells Scorpius they've "got a taxi waiting," and says it's the first rule of Piss-Poor Planning, of which he is the grand master: "Have your exit ready before your entrance." Scorpius is like, you caused a race riot? And John smiles. "Pretty cool, huh?" Scorpius says he's impressed, and a Charrid steps in front of them with a rifle: "Remain where you are or I'll shoot. Release your weapons, now." Braca steps out of nowhere and shoots the Charrid with a sexy little smile, then disappears again. "Braca?" Scorpius gasps, and John grunts. "Yeah. Feel the love, Mr. Burns." They hurry on and Scorpius thinks, "Not with Sikozeu around... Oh wait, *she's a total freak!* Perfect! Is this *Christmas?*"

Chiana pulls Noranti through the riot of soldiers, getting all kind of trampled, and yells, "Frell!" They run up to a Scarran soldier and Chiana disassembles with her usual complete lack of effort, which is always hilarious: "Hey, can you help us? We're...um, afraid." Heh. The Scarran tells them to back off, and then Noranti gives him some Granny Blow and he twirls about before falling on the floor. "It works!" Noranti nods at Chiana. Everybody's so busy! I don't know what's going on!

D'Argo pulls Sikozeu through a fight, with Rygel Jazzin' it after them, begging John not to leave without them. I don't know if it's a joke or what. D'Argo shoves Sikozeu at a Charrid: "Warrior, can you take this Kalish piece of trell?" He looks at her, and D'Argo

smashes his face and he goes down. D'Argo and Sikozu nod at each other: "Nice." Rygel hurrying them along, she offers to try it again, and he pushes her at another one. "Warrior. Could you take this Kalish piece of trek?" They're so funny, and so weird.

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John, Scorpius, and Aeryn come down a corridor, with *Lo'La* actually in their sights. Scorpius gasps that even shrouded, she can't outrun a Stryker, and Aeryn tells him that they don't have to go far: *Moya's* disguised as an oil freighter in the shipping yards, and ready to starburst. Two Charrids appear and John is like, "Aeryn, could you...?" She hands Scorpius off to John and pulls her pistol. Scorpius babbles another negative, this time about how they can make a bargain, and John asks his where his nerve's gone. "Grasshopper, just stick with me. They ain't gonna pop Fat Man." Aeryn gestures for them to be quiet and looks out into the hangar; Scorpius suddenly drops to the floor, gurgling. John kneels at his side and tells him not to pass out. Scorpius lies perfectly still. Aeryn kneels too, and cocks her pistol at his head. "Get up, or I kill you now."

Commercial. Something's changed. You never end two acts on the same beat. Something's changed. She has her gun to his head and she's telling him to choose. He's doing everything he can to slow them down, and has been all along. The last thing he wants is off Katratzi, but we don't know that and we don't know why. Or if it's evil. (It's kinda evil, but not in a John-centric way like you might think. It's not terribly loving or gentle, and it doesn't really seem to take into account that the Cold War arguably what's keeping everybody alive in the whole U.T., which is okay in theory but shitty in practice.) "You need to know when a woman's serious," John advises, and grabs gagging Scorpius, helping him to his feet. Scorpius is now draped over John's shoulders, as he always was. "Okay," says Aeryn, shooting the ceiling above the Charrid soldiers and telling them to drop their guns. She shoots the ceiling again and rushes them, warning that they can't shoot without blowing up John's knob. John hurries in with Scorpius; Aeryn keeps her gun trained on them. They put their stuff down. "Well, there you go," says John. "Someone finally got smart." Oh, John. That's serious asking for it.

Scorpius starts to gag and bends over, and John shifts his hold on his arm: Scorpius straightens and hits Aeryn in the face, knocking her down, then brings the arm around and gives John a gut shot, dropping him as well. The Charrids quickly pick up their rifles from the floor and Scorpius kneels on John's back. Like he always has. John hyperventilates beneath him: "You stupid son of a bitch!" Scorpius apologizes and tells him to breathe deeply: the Fat Man is going wild with Scorpius on top like this. John struggles, but Scorpius pins his hands: "Now, if you trust me enough to live, you may well discover the truth." At the word, at the concept of *trusting* Scorpius, John goes wild, screaming into the floor; the bomb sends up an alarm. And John goes on screaming, with everything in the air that matters and a great big "To Be Continued" across his smushed face. That darn Scorpius!

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- "Love You." "...Love You, Too." -

-- Page 1 --

Scorpius holds John face-down on the floor of the Katratzi hangar bay. I don't know if you've ever been there, but let me tell you: that whole place is *filthy*. I hate to be like prejudiced or whatever, but when people say that Charrids are dirty, it's not racism: it's simple fact. It's like part of their culture. I'm sorry but I have to say it.

John screams and bucks underneath Scorpius, who tells him he doesn't know what he's doing. John, from his extremely hunched position, says he knows damn well what he's doing: "I'm gonna frickin' nuke you, and half this damn base!" He can see Aeryn's boots, where Scorpius knocked her before this romantic little scene got underway.

War Minister Ahkna walks into the bay and Scorpius says quietly, "Kill me later."

Ahkna's like, "How about now? *You're still my prisoner.*" I love that, like they were playing Cops & Robbers and he was totally cheating. John, from the floor, looks up and says mushmouthed, "Technically, he's my prisoner." Scorpius sweetly thanks him for the backup, and John tells them all that when Aeryn wakes up, she's totally gonna kill Scorpius herself. It's...they're all being so cute right now that it's hard to really care.

The whole episode is not like this, it's wonderful, and this is wonderful but in another way. Emperor Staleek walks in and commences cute-ing: "I'm so pleased to see you're all safe." See what I mean? Adorable. He's attended by Scarran guards, of course, and he actually feels cute enough to give Ahkna a bit of a stroke: apparently her "forces" did a great job "quelling the unrest." And then he tells her to fuck off, all, "...A duty to which I'm sure she's eager to return." She stares at him for a sec and takes off. John, still a pancake under Scorpius: "See ya later, sweetheart!" Cute!

The Emperor takes a step closer to the two men, and...smashes Scorpius in the face! Not cute! He ruined it! Scorpius screams and falls off John, who sits up rubbing his nose, thanks Staleek, and immediately jumps to Aeryn's side. She wakes with a jerk and a cry, and he shushes her with a finger upheld. "Did we win?" she whispers. *Cute!* The Emperor kneels next to them: "You'll be delighted to hear my guards were able to secure the rest of your crew as well. Coincidentally, as they were also nearing exits. Like yourselves, I'm sure they were simply trying to avoid any...entanglement in violence." John asks where they are, and Staleek assures him they're guarded well, and so quite safe. John looks down at his knob, which...now, far be it from me. But how bad do things get before the thing explodes? The leaders of the Scarran army looking down at you while you're getting frotted by the King of Hell and your very own mortal enemy?

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"Were you planning to leave?" asks Staleek conversationally. John admits that he was heading out "temporarily," to discuss Grayza's competing offer. "But you had a riot going on, we didn't want to bother you. We decided to take our own car." Staleek tells them he's lucky they didn't leave: "Base defenses have been placed on highest alert. Any non-Scarran vessels will automatically be targeted and destroyed." So as usual, Scorpius is the good guy. John nods that they're lucky, and Staleek offers to convey him to the Carrier. John says that's very kind. "My pleasure, John," says Staleek. I think somehow this whole fuckup actually ended up making Staleek respect him *more*. That is so John Crichton, though: now that you've seen the chaos he barely even has

to *try* and create around himself, aren't you going to treat him a little nicer? He's like a gun-toting Pippi Longstocking. In leather.

Captain Jenek comms the Emperor, regarding *Lo'La*, that she is an Eradicator, of Topratkin design. So I guess I'll write that down for later! He says the fugly DRDs are already pulling the star charts and vector logs, and "completely neutralized her systems." Somewhere, Chiana's already planning her comeback tour of D'Argo's face. Staleek tells them to completely wipe *Lo'La* when they're done, so nobody will know they've checked her out. Yucky, for some reason.

Scorpius stands in front of a table, leaning on his hands and trying to explain to the cast that he prevented their leaving for their own protection. D'Argo and Rygel get pissed to learn about this interesting thing he's done, but John's already up to speed: "You stuck a knife in our back!" Scorpius shakes his head: "Your plan would've failed." Because they would have been blown up, for starters? Chiana's like, "We could've been on *Lo'La* by now!" and Sikozeu interrupts her, ordering her to hear him out, and Scorpius shouts at them that *Lo'La*'s quite likely already disabled by the Scarrans. D'Argo says it's impossible, which it I guess isn't, and Scorpius continues: "...And found *Moya*. Even if we managed to get off Katratzi, the base's weapons would have destroyed us." Right, exactly. It didn't occur to me until just now, but I always kind of loved the awesome protection and D'Argo-Only Access of *Lo'La*. It is right that you should have one thing of your own, and all that, and the fact that she loved only him meant he could get closer to the Aeryn/Pilot side of the warrior line -- and the *Farscape One* side of his line with John. It balances things out and contributes to his bad-ass quotient.

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Now, that's all true, but I don't like her getting interfered with. Speak though it might of Chiana's good fortune in the near future. Aeryn's like, "Stealth is no longer an option." Because that's *always* Aeryn's first plan. She's such a subtle girl. "Does *Lo'La* have enough firepower to blast us out?" That's more like it. She and D'Argo stand close to each other and talk warrior talk, and the awesome part is that *Lo'La* probably *could*: "I'd call *Lo'La*, she'd blast a hole, and we'd run through." Love it. John's like, "Now, before someone else screws us." So D'Argo goes, "Okay." They never just do the plan! I love this! He calls her. She sits in the hangar bay, still and silent, surrounded by Scarran guards. "Duhstu hapeesta!" he calls again, but there's no answer.

Chiana immediately assumes the comms are jammed, but they're not. Sikozeu's like, then they disabled *Lo'La*, *just like Scorpius said*. She somehow avoids licking her thumb and putting yet another mark on the invisible scoreboard, but honestly: it's like, do the Kalish have a symbol for infinity? D'Argo says that this thing, which is totally possible and in fact has happened, is impossible, and Chiana suggests they still try getting their "free ride" out on the Command Carrier. One of the things I like best about the season is how the crew finally started seeing their freedom, their sovereignty and family, as independent of the PK threat: the PKs are just tools. Like the Scarrans, like technology, like Rygel and Noranti: good for things. Take the fear out of the equation and you start saying stuff like, "Hey *Command Carrier*, can we hitch a ride?" or "We totally have to get Grayza fired." You see the system for what it is, anarchic and shifting with a lot of little gaps, and you realize that not only have the walls disappeared, they never existed. It's gorgeous. It's Aeryn.

Ahkna's like, "Try it and find out," and John tells her he doesn't even know what the fuck she's talking about. "Oh, let me enlighten you! Grayza doesn't frighten me, her Command Carrier doesn't frighten me, your bomb doesn't frighten me..." She reaches out and runs her finger over the top of the bomb. John's priapic little bone of contention, she touches it. Hands on the knob! John backs the hell up and she smiles. "...And neither do you." He looks at her and grins: "Damn. I'm on the brink of devastation, Minnie Pearl." She throws him like a ragdoll, a Scarran guard blocks Aeryn, and Ahkna climbs up and onto John, giving the Fat Man a good feel. "...Perhaps we should go there together." John collapses back onto the table, because: again? So soon?

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But also, between Scorpius last week and now Ahkna, Aeryn's getting some competition in the "rubbing up on John Crichton" sweepstakes that once was her proudest and most admirable accomplishment. Credits.

PA talking ugly Scarran talk, 1812 dancing around in a room and assuring John it's bug-free. "Good boy." Scorpius follows John into the room for his come-to-Jesus. John cocks Winona and shows her to Scorpius's face, then lays her gently down on the table. Got it? "Okay, convince me." *Crystherium Utilia*, Scorpius says, and then a flashback to him touching the flowers. "Very important." John's like, seriously. "That why they're growing them in the Bat Cave?" Scorpius nods, remembering that John's been down there. "Listen up, Grasshopper: I finally have a plan that works. It's simple! We get in, we break bread, we see the sights, we grab you, we get out. And now you're gonna throw *flowers* at me?" Scorpius is like, yeah. "We need to destroy the Crystherium!" John sighs and shakes his head: "Flowers trump wormholes?" Scorpius says that, at the moment, they do. And they do. And they always do. And this entire scene takes way too long, but we've gotta get back to Harvey, gotta play Find The Lady with Scorpius, and gotta play up the whole plot of this episode, which is that flowers trump bombs, in a way where it doesn't sound all Kent State stupid.

John cups a smoke and lights it with a Zippo, across from Harvey at a desk like in *Homicide*. (I don't know if that's the reference, but I do know *Homicide* was *Farscape* with cops, and that the *Wire* people are at least as scary as *Farscape* or *Veronica Mars* people, with similarly good reason.) Harvey is wearing a knitted cap over his mask, like a perp. There are flashes of crazy, and John tells Harvey no smoking in his head. I wonder -- this isn't the first time John's been angry and weird about smoking -- what kind of cancer it was, with Leslie. Do we ever know for sure? I know lots of people like that. John busts Harvey across the face and knocks his coffee right out of his hand. They front on each other at length and finally John indicates the Bird of Paradise plant on his desk, and Harvey laughs. "The number-one secret in the whole Scarran Empire. Huh! Even the Charrids and the Kalish haven't figured its real deal." Harvey sits back, crossing his arms over his chest, secure in the knowledge that, crappy American accent aside, Scorpius and Harvey are one of the most indelibly wonderful villains in the history of television.

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Scorpius explains how Stark once lived on Katratzi, assisting the leadership caste with their death rituals. (Flashback, unnecessarily, to Stark in the Gammak base, acting crazy and screaming "my side, your side" and getting off in the Aurora Chair. In case

you were lucky enough to forget about freakin' Stark for a second.) "That's why you were torturing him when I met you?" Whoa! Retroactive continuity! Love it.

"Crystherium growth requires very specific and rare conditions. The Scarrans can only propel their power forward from these very few locations." So, John figures, simply destroying a bunch of flowers is supposed to set them back? "For hundreds of cycles." But why?

Harvey has another cup of coffee: "'Cause they need 'em. Scarrans: simplistic, brutish creatures. Shoulda died out generations ago." And if they eat the flower? "Big brains. Evolutionarily competitive: Staleek, Ahkna." And if not? Harvey leans forward. "Your dog could beat them at checkers!" John knocks the coffee out of Harvey's hand again. "Though Stark provided many details," Scorpius continues, "I was unable to learn of Katratzi's location. You rescued him prior to that breakthrough." John "apologizes," and as usual, Scorpius hates that kind of insincerity: "No, you're not." He nearly shrugs. "You were taking too long with the wormholes, John. Reality provides opportunity. I needed some way to hurt the Scarrans *now*."

John bitches at Harvey (and Scorpius also) about how this makes no sense. He's frustrated enough to slap himself on the forehead. "You...you take the knowledge from my head, and then you tell me that you give it to him. What, so I'm gonna rescue him?" Scorpius: "I have no wormhole knowledge, John."

But then Harvey, what? Harvey smiles after a coffin flashback from the first chapter of the trilogy: "So what? I lied."

Scorpius smiles, a little sadly: "Harvey? Oh, that is clever. We had a deal. I help you rescue Aeryn Sun from the Scarrans, you give me wormholes."

John spins the Zippo on his desk as Harvey admits the truth: "Boss says lay low, don't go near him anymore. Give him some peace."

Scorpius is like, "So I guess you betrayed me?" and Harvey spells it out: "You went and left him behind. To die."

It's weird having Harvey and Scorpius say the story at the same time: "You had no intention of returning for my rescue, did you?"

Harvey: "Fail-safe. You screw the boss, I find a way to get you re-interested."

John's upset, of course, but frames it as Scorpius trying to put his shit on John. "If my neural clone has returned, it is only because you have betrayed me."

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John: "You trying to say Harvey's back because of me?" Yeah. And because you killed Aeryn. Again. And Chiana. And everything inside. "You should honor your contracts, John." He shakes his head: "No. No contract. You betrayed us."

"We had a deal," says Harvey. John slams his hand on the desk. "NO! He *screwed* us!" Harvey calls attention to John's totally bankrupt high horse. "We had a deal! You took a bribe. You banked the cut, but when the heat's on...you're just another dumb copper doin' his job. Unbelievable!" Harvey slurps coffee noisily, and reaches for a jelly donut: "Look at these beauties!" John stands up and knocks the donut out of Harvey's hand, ashamed for being ashamed. "Would you have left me to perish with the Scarrans?" Under the circumstances? "Yeah." Harvey leans in and explains *Farscape* to John, one more time. "Hey. He's right, you know. We're brothers from different sides of an imaginary line...your side/my side, my side..." And John screams again: "Siddown!"

"So, here we are. Cadaver and Hutch. A team." Scorpius snorts but nods. And now? Now, we destroy the flowers. And if John says no, which he won't, but if he does, Scorpius will do it himself. On the other hand, "Rest assured mine is now the only path off Katratzi." Which, yeah. Harvey tells John he better listen: "He's smarter than you." John complains that Scorpius used him; Scorpius corrects him: "We use each other." John finally grasps part of the point: "You're *better* at it." Scorpius smiles inside: "Oh, you're learning." He compliments John on the bomb -- again, in case it wasn't obvious how gross the bomb plan actually is -- and John gets up, unready for that jelly. He uncocks Winona and stands up to walk away: "When it goes off? Plan on being nearby." John's so close to taking his freedom back from Scorpius, and he doesn't even see it yet, because he's too intimately tied up with him still. The relationship has a lot of baggage and history that is a burden for John, and none of the sort for Scorpius; you see the system for what it is, anarchic and shifting with a lot of little gaps, and you realize that not only have the walls disappeared, they never existed. Scorpius can just love John for what he is, because he's already defined his responsibility and none of it gets on him.

"Four hundred Scarran Scrambler Cannons were trained on us the microt that you entered here," Braca explains to John and Aeryn, as Commandant Grayza sits nearby. "Minister Ahkna informed us that, unless you were returned to them safely, they'd fire." Aeryn's like, under the truce, they can't do that. "They'll let us go," Grayza clarifies, "They just won't let you leave with us." That would violate the terms of the agreement. Grayza asks Braca and Aeryn for a moment alone. John nods at Aeryn and tells her to stay on comms. I only hate Grayza when John's around, but that doesn't mean I want to see her brought low. I hope she can get through this with a little grace. *Una poca de gracia*, you might say. This week particularly.

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Captain Braca walks quickly along beside Aeryn: "There's nothing that I can do to help. Even the enhanced Marauder wouldn't get you clear. The Scarrans are on full alert, weapons primed...you'll never get out of here." She abruptly breaks off from him with a "see you later," and he's confused. "Where are you going? That's a medical area." She nods, saying simply that she has something to take care of. "Personal problem?" Yeah. He gets official, because he's Braca: "Let's go." She just stares him down: "You need to watch?" He tells a guard to wait for her, and walks off; she goes into the medical bay. Four people: the Commandant and the Captain; the Assassin and the Astronaut. Connected by blood and sex and power and violence. And Aeryn's headed into the med bay, even as Grayza's baring herself before John, who will ignore her. And Braca will go on thinking he felled Grayza, and pining for the one person who's closer to Aeryn and John both than anyone else. It's all quite dreadful to contemplate.

"All that astonishing wormhole knowledge and still you will not share it with us," Grayza hisses. "You came in here big and bold, dancing on tabletops. And look at you now, begging for scraps." John clarifies: "I may be jammed. Possibly dead. But I am *not* begging. You can get that fantasy out of your head." He turns his head and looks at her, but he can't hold the glance. His face is...there's hurt there. More than you might have thought. "In my hands, you can have peace. / can have peace!" Points off for word choice, since he immediately and poisonously seizes on it: "I have *been* in

your hands. There's no peace there. Just power." It's as close as he'll get to admitting what happened, what she took. Girls and boys deal with things in different ways: no [bi-curious escapades with spider people](#) (besides the Scorpius thing), no [time-traveling redemption](#). Just this: in the end Grayza did not benefit, and he's worked it out for himself. By saving the unsaveable, by rescuing the princess, by swallowing Scorpius's darkness and seeing it in himself, by teaching himself manhood again, he got Winona back.

"You are so self-righteous! I have used all my skills, all my resources, for one perfect chance at peace." It's one thing to call her a whore for the heppel oil; that I respect. But she betrays herself if she thinks that what she did to John was equal in its purity and pragmatism. In this second she says she'll never be more. "And because of you, it is gone. And I am..." She bites her lip. "Frelled? Screwed?" He finally looks at her, full of rage. "Raped?" She takes a breath and raises her head, unable to face his indictment. "Welcome to the Universe, Commandant." John stands up and walks out. *Resolution*, with all Scorpius's dictionary *diff@rance* intact: the violation's off the table. If we see her again, it'll be brought low. You lose the fear and you take back that power -- and you have to figure this out for yourself, it's different every time -- and the universe changes around you. Fat Man's now dispensable, and that's the point of the trilogy, because this show curls up around itself like DNA.

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Chiana's amazed, speaking of getting things back no boy should be without, that they let her and D'Argo back on *Lo'La*. "Everything's working, right?" It does seem to be; the infringement remains a secret. "All right, well, let's get the others, blast our way outta here." She runs an instrument over the ceiling, walking on the console. Like she runs the place! He sniffs and says no, somebody's been there. "I can smell it." He's gotta make sure she's really his again. "The defenses were up, right?" She continues to work on the ceiling; *Lo'La* beeps and hums at them. "No, I don't know what they've done. Maybe frelled with the weapons? Planted a homing beacon. Or a bomb." It's a mystery, this love story. They'll have to work on this together, make sure there aren't any other booby-traps. (Aeryn's still in the Carrier's med bay, solving mysteries.)

Chiana climbs down, over D'Argo. "Frell it! I have to shut the ship down and run a full systems diagnostic check." *Lo'La* beeps in response; Chiana asks how long that'll take. Three hours. "What if it finds something that we can't fix?" Then they go with Scorpius's plan: "The frelling elevators."

Rygel's like: "Lock ourselves in an elevator while it tunnels through the solid rock?" Noranti says it sounds reasonable, but Rygel thinks it just sounds fahrbot. Scorpius allows that Sikoze might not be able to provide elevator access, so they have to find Stark. Rygel's great: "*What?*" Noranti asks who that is, and Rygel's just like, "Another lunatic with the wrong number of eyes." She nods. "Oh." Ha! Stark comes in, and Rygel goes, "And there he is." Scorpius whispers that he's not: "That is a bioloid replica." Thank God! Rygel asks how he could know that, and Scorpius realigns all my trouble from last week like a magic chiropractor: "Stark would never torture me." He tells us that Staleek replaced Stark to fool Ahkna. *What?* We are moving really fast. Rygel's even like, "So but you're actually working for Staleek?" and Scorpius agrees that Staleek is, in fact, under that impression. Noranti volubly admires Scorpius's

"compartmentalization of duplicity," as do I. Scorpius explains they need to find the real Stark, who's gotta be chained in a bioloid duplicator somewhere. John asks where Aeryn went, when she went, and she'll only tell him it was unfinished business. "Wanna to tell me about it?" She says "later"; everybody watching screams their stupid heads off. Ahkna watches them as John fills her in on everybody: "D'Argo's still workin' on his ship, and Sikoze's tryin' to scan the codes." Aeryn asks for options. "We could always give the Scarrans what they want," he laughs, and she points out that they would die within seconds. Also everybody else, but I guess that goes without saying. They enter their room, where Ahkna is waiting. "Or, we could try the banzai approach," John says loudly, not yet seeing her: "Or we could just follow Scorpy's plan." He turns around and sees Ahkna and immediately jumps back onto a table, to get away from her hat. "Damn! You cannot stop following me around, can ya?" She nods. "And you just can't leave. Wouldn't Grayza help you?" He informs her -- played, remember, by Browder's wife Francesca Buller, the most talented alien lady this side of anywhere -- that Grayza's now the high bidder. Ahkna says she's ready to make her offer: "You'll go free. Now. You leave Scorpius behind, for me." John asks what's in it for her; Ahkna walks towards John and Aeryn immediately, awesomely, steps between them. "I will make sure the Hierarchy blames Staleek for your escape." John's like, "As we all know, I am ignorant of Scarran politics, but I'm guessing that means you'll get his job." Ahkna sighs and looks down; Aeryn smiles. "Ambition," he says, and looks at her hard. "Well. If it were done when 'tis done, 't'were best it were done quickly." Ahkna stares at him and ignores the reference -- those Scarrans have like no culture at all -- and nods almost imperceptibly. Aeryn watches Ahkna and then stands before her, looking straight into her face. Ahkna inclines her head, smiles, and walks around Aeryn, chuckling to herself as she leaves. John jumps off the table and stands right behind his Aeryn. "Thanks," he murmurs. "She scares the *crap* outta me." Aeryn looks after her for a bit, darts her eyes at John, and somehow manages not to smile as Claudia Black awesomely ad libs, with a tiny nod: "It's the hat." John, equally admirable, also does not break into giggles. Cute! So cute!

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Jenek enters the Emperor's chambers with a Kalish male. "About Crichton's bomb. In under a quarter of an arn, we will have computed the final code." The Kalish hands the Emperor a device and Staleek holds it up: "Satisfactory." Sikoze walks down the corridor to the elevator again, with her Kalish bioloid buddy. He informs her that the codes have been changed due to the riots. "What can be done?" Sikoze and the Resistance Kalish pretend to be loitering administratively as a Charrid soldier exits the elevator and stalks on. "There's a master keychip that overrides all codes," the helpful robot offers. "It'll run the elevator, and give you complete access to the system's schematics." That's an amazing little thing right there. Especially since we've never heard of it. "Can you get it?" she asks, and sighs when he says it'll be really hard. "And if I get caught?" Sikoze completes the thought: it would expose the entire Kalish underground. "Just tell me this: will it help defeat the Scarrans?" She nods, meaning it. "Yes. Yes, it will." He leaves, and she watches him go. In her element she is just about the best thing ever. I wish there were more bioloids. The Kalish underground is like the only good thing in the entire U.T.

John has the bomb in his hands, and he's written "Hi There" on one side. Aeryn asks what he's thinking. "I think Lady MacBeth is gonna find a way to screw us, but Staleek is probably way ahead of her." Aeryn hums, nodding. "Which leaves us with Plan..." Aeryn completes the thought: "E." He smiles at her and they say it together: "E for elevator!" Not only cute, but also verrry romantic, considering the whole *Sesame Street* thing from back on Earth. His plan, his language, his alphabet: her more. And it's not a one-way street either, so there's no weirdness. I love this show so much. "Mm hmm. And I'm gonna tap dance for the Emperor." She cautions him that Staleek's not an idiot, and John nods. "But he can't do jack to me as long as this bomb's ticking." John and Aeryn look at each other, and the bomb slowly winds down and stops ticking. Lovely. Commercial.

John and Aeryn hurry down a Katratzi corridor, useless bomb in hand. "You can't reactivate the bomb in any way?" He almost grins. "Not in any useful manner." Chiana comms in asking what the hell they're supposed to do; D'Argo tells him *Lo'La's* diagnostic will take at least another hour. Rygel and Noranti comm in to say that they're going to get caught way before that. "Sparky, where are ya?" Rygel tells him there are Charrids everywhere. "Can't go anywhere at this point," Noranti says. John just tells them to get to the elevator if they can. Noranti asks Rygel where the elevator is; Staleek asks Ahkna where Crichton is. This is like *Doctor Who* with the running around like *Benny Hill* all of a sudden. Like Ahkna might be wearing a bikini suddenly. She says he won't get far: "The station is sealed." Staleek tells her that might just end up being her epitaph.

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Scorpius stands with Sikoze as she works the elevator console; sparks are shooting out of it, so it's like that. John and Aeryn run up as the base PA broadcasts short ugly words. "Sikoze has managed to summon the Rabrokator," Scorpius says, and John asks what the hell that is. "Some kind of massage tool?" (...*What?*) Sikoze explains it's a drilling elevator, like a Wonkavator basically, but that they need the keychip to actually use it. The elevator doors open and the people inside are like, "Bwuh?" John hits the Kalish occupant, Aeryn hits the Charrid, and together they immediately drag them out of the elevator.

D'Argo runs up. I am a lot happier when everybody's together. "What's *he* doing here?" D'Argo asks, guarding the elevator while they work. "Scorpius? He's giving us the shaft, as usual," says John, and ushers everybody inside: "Everybody in. Mind the gap. Safer in than out." Kinda! Sikoze gets on with Scorpius, who suggests she crosswire the drilling controls, as Chiana's hurrying onboard, and Sikoze says it still won't work without the thing. The Kalish bioloid runs up, getting the business end of D'Argo's Qualta in his face, and he begs for mercy as everybody points their guns at him. Sikoze hurries over and tells everybody to chill out. They do, and he hands her the chip. She sighs and thanks him.

Rapid gunfire rings out, and the Kalish Underground guy drops dead; everybody shoots back and Sikoze screams. The doors close on several Scarrans shooting in; Aeryn tells Sikoze to get them moving. She chips the console and gets control; the elevator jerks and jumps and Sikoze cries out. Chiana tells her she drives like *dren*, and everybody holds on as John orders her to get the drills working. Scorpius says to head to the Crysterium cavern: "The shaft ends there. It means they will not be able

to reach us in another car." And it also means that Sikozy will have more time to activate the drill. She nods, because of course Scorpius not only always gets what he wants, but he's always right. Rygel and Noranti, still out in the base, can't seem to raise Crichton on comms. "Frell him!" shouts Rygel, and gives in. "Let's find Stark." When even Rygel is like, "Clearly Stark," you know you're screwed. Noranti gets the cute kind of Alzheimer's on him: "Good idea. ...Why?" Because Stark knows the base, so maybe he knows a way out. Noranti nods and follows the Jazzy. So scary! A troika of the three least dependable, nuttiest people in the universe. They'll end up killing everybody! Even Chiana would be like, "That sounds like a really bad idea. Maybe I should help them out."

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A Scarran watches a Kalish working on the elevator with Ahkna close by. Sparks and everything. Ahkna growls that they're in the Rabrokator, which they're trying to override, and the approaching Staleek growls back.

Grayza looks out a Carrier porthole, at Katratzi. Braca comes in and tells her that there's been weapons fire in the base. "Communication intercepts indicate Scarran forces are in pursuit of Crichton, with orders to kill." She assumes they've deactivated the bomb, which Braca notes means that "he's lost." Who's he talking about?

Depends on if you believe in true love. "As are we," says Grayza, and stalks toward command. "Go to battle stations." *Oh, snap!* Her ass is crazy! Braca's like, "Ma'am?" and she gets very cold and very still: "Are you questioning me?" Um, yes I am,

[Admiral Cain](#). Peace doesn't really favor the middle-finger kamikaze approach.

Charging Katratzi now is just so...bratty!

The elevator stops with a crash and the doors start to open. Sikozy says she can't get the drill going, and John calls her Sputnik. "Stay on it." The three gunmen exit; Scorpius and Chiana follow. Sikozy calls out to Chiana, because the doors are suddenly closing thanks to the tinkering upstairs, and Chiana hops back into the doorway, holding them open. Scorpius roams out into the flowers. "Aeryn, stay with him. Be careful," John murmurs. Aeryn takes off after Scorpius. And Sikozy yells, hilariously, "They're trying to override the override!" John hates "dueling overrides," don't you? For some reason that makes me laugh. I think because it reminds me of my favorite funny line in the whole series, Stark's whole speech about "The explosion should make the budong vomit, and you can ride out on the wave of the vomit, in front of the vomit" in "Green Eyed Monster," which for some reason is the funniest thing to me (Me! Vomitâ™s greatest enemy! The Emetic Avenger!), and the reason that I decided I was in love with him against all mandate of reason. D'Argo tells Sikozy that *Lo'La* should now be functional, so if Sikozy can drill them to the surface they'll be free and clear. I'll tell you right now that's not happening.

Scorpius walks out into the field of flowers, staring at the Matriarch plant on its stage. "We must destroy them." Aeryn asks why as John joins them. "The mother plant is the key: it fertilizes the others. Kill it, and no new Crysterium can grow here." He hurries out into the flowers, and John and Aeryn follow behind. Scorpius picks a bloom and throws it on the floor, aiming a Charrid rifle at the Matriarch. A force field jumps up around it, but he just keeps shooting, again and again. "Shielded," Aeryn says.

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The Kalish dealing with the elevator controls notifies Staleek that the Rabrokator has stopped at the caverns, which predictably drives Staleek nuts. The Kalish nods at his outburst and keeps working.

Sikozu uses both her hands to press controls in the elevator, begging it quietly to work. Chiana -- both arms and legs splayed to hold the doors open -- urges her to hurry. "This door's getting pushier." She fights the door; Sikozu fights the controls. Scorpius keeps shooting, futilely, at the Matriarch. He begins to sound less like Normal Scorpius and a lot more like Scary Growling Half-Scarran Scorpius. You never hear that voice unless it's for that second that he goes crazy and then gets it together. I don't know if that's so likely right now. "Stark didn't know about it. Stark didn't know about it! This must be a new addition by the Scarrans! Rrrrr!" He starts walking toward the Matriarch plant as John, Aeryn, and D'Argo watch from the stairs. He really just goes nuts, frothing and growling. "He doesn't like to lose, does he?" asks John, but it's like: how would anyone know? It's Scorpius. He's never done this before. Of course he's losing it. The elevator clanks and whirs, and Sikozu tells them the drills are going. "We can core our way to anywhere on the planet." Chiana's still having crazy trouble with the doors.

The Kalish tells Staleek he's got control, and Staleek orders him to get it back up to their level so they can get down there and misbehave.

Chiana, caught in the overridden doors, screams for D'Argo; he runs to help her. John considers Scorpius, who is now crazily climbing onto the Matriarch platform like the S&M ghost of King Kong. He looks totally freaking crazy. Chiana grunts in pain as D'Argo helps her get the doors open again. John and Aeryn in the middle. Chiana and D'Argo trying to open the door and keep them safe. Sikozu trying to keep the elevator under control. And on the other side, Scorpius acting like a giant freak and menacing the Matriarch with his creepy hands. Something deft is happening with the elevator: D'Argo finally gets the door open, crawling beneath Chiana. Between her legs. She jumps into the elevator with a groan and thud, and D'Argo blocks the door with his feet, ushering her out again, and *she* then climbs underneath him, between *his* legs. Everybody but Rygel and Noranti, who have no disconnect from the body at all -- which is both their virtue and their vice -- are down in an *immense cavern* which contains a plant they call the *Matriarch*. At the bottom of a *giant shaft*, which they're hoping to climb or rocket themselves back out of. Inside a *giant drill*.

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And what's Scorpius doing? Screaming at the Matriarch, which is a symbol of Scarran intelligence. The heart of Scarran society, which abused and tortured him and his mother both, for which he debases himself as a double agent. He wants to destroy the Scarrans; by accident of birth he is half-Scarran. You feel for him, here in its heart, unable to simply crush it. Here at the bottom of the well.

Sikozu falls backwards out of the elevator, between D'Argo's legs, and he himself jumps back, letting the doors shut them all out. "We couldn't override their override of our override," he comms, and John snits, "They stole our getaway car." Aeryn doesn't stop staring at Scorpius as she mumbles, "That's our only way out." Sikozu and Chiana lean on the elevator doors, listening to the action in the shaft, and then abruptly break away and start running toward us. "And their way in," John says, and Aeryn turns to look at him.

Scarran soldiers load into the elevator, and Staleek tells Ahkna her father would be proud: "Security under him was riddled with top-down incompetence as well." He turns his back on her, all, "Good one, me," and Jenek comms immediately that Grayza's Command Carrier is getting battle-ready. Staleek growls and hates females some more.

D'Argo confirms for Chiana that there are no other exits: "Nothing but rock and hay-fever." There is a rumbling noise from the elevator shaft and Chiana tells them company's coming. "Frell," Sikozy says discreetly. D'Argo's like, "Time to go." But where do you go when you can't get out? You turn into something else.

Scorpius is still growling at the Matriarch; his slapping hands force red sparks and burn him but he keeps going. "Grasshopper?" John and Aeryn run to him, as D'Argo yells for them to hide; John and Aeryn drop down again into the field of flowers. D'Argo comes running down the stairs with Chiana and Sikozy following him.

There are four Scarran soldiers riding on the elevator -- John's bomb is on the floor near them.

Chiana and Sikozy scurry into the flowers and Aeryn tells them to drop. John looks at Chiana: "Hey, did you get my bomb?" Chiana cocks her head at him and Aeryn is startled. He slaps his forehead, hilariously. "I can't *believe* it! I left a *nuclear bomb* in an *elevator*." He nurses the headache he just gave himself; Chiana assures him he's done worse, in his time.

Aeryn worries that their weapons will be useless if they're Scarrans; John of course is like, "It's totally gonna be Scarrans." Scorpius joins John in the plants: "She cannot be taken alive, John." He drags Scorpius down into the plants and tells him to STFU about that. "Am I wrong," asks Chiana, "or are we felled?" Sikozy shakes her head: "No." Got a new magic power, do ya? Of course she does. She finally spills about the whole bioloid thing: "There are others like me. We are part of a resistance movement dedicated to overthrowing Scarran domination." In the shaft, a Scarran smells and then notices the bomb. "We are genetically engineered to kill Scarrans by emitting an intense radiation that specifically destroys their heat-producing gland."

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John asks if anybody else knew about this, and Aeryn literally goes, "Bwuh?" John drops his head and sighs; D'Argo tells Sikozy to go ahead and be magical some more. "Not without a promise first. If the Scarrans were to learn there are others engineered like myself, they would kill millions of innocents to root us out." D'Argo shakes his head. She's still learning how we do things. "Sikozy, we're a team. Your promise is safe."

The elevator stops and the leader orders the Guards to take formation. They prime their weapons and face the door. As it opens, you can tell they're leaving the bomb there.

Sikozy shakes her head and sighs sadly. "D'Argo...the Scarrans are very good at retrieving the truth." John and Aeryn, as one, assure her they're never getting tortured again. *I'm Butch. This is Sundance*. D'Argo: "Agreed. Go." The family enters a pact, *led by Sikozy*, that says freedom outweighs safety. They won't go down again. As the Scarrans head out into the cavern, Sikozy hands D'Argo the keychip: "Do not look upon me." Scorpius stands up too and she gives him a hard look: "*Especialy* you." John pulls Scorpius back down into the field of flowers; Sikozy stands alone.

The Scarrans reach the stairs and sight her: "Kalish, present yourself and surrender." They start toward her. This is why she's a worthy lover for Scorpius: she burns. In the chamber of the Matriarch, Sikozy holds her arms out, cruciform, and slowly begins to rise in the air, giving off a rose-colored glow. She shimmers; waves of radiation play across the field. The leader hisses, trains his gun on her; she becomes brighter and brighter. The Scarrans gag and scream. She is the embodiment of a people's rage; the power of political protest. She's the burning truth of justice, in a field of flowers. She's Johnny Radiation and Molly Pitcher, Harriet Tubman and anyone who ever drew the line of responsibility around herself further than her own eye could see. She is revolution, beautiful and terrible, self-sacrificing, recombinant and self-resurrecting. I go on and on, but come on: there's not enough room in the speed of this story to spend this much time on a single image unless it counts. Unless she was La Bomba all along.

The Fat Man was obscenity compared to this: a woman doing the one thing she was born to do, for freedom. Even in a cavern with just a few Scarrans around to make it count, she is beautiful and strong. Here's a list of things that glow: *Moya* as she knits herself in the fabric of the universe, moving under its surface and in its infinity. Zhaan, as she finally passes over to the Goddess forever, without ever having met this woman, which whom she shares so much rage and passion and truth. Stark in the moment of his (sometimes *her*, don't forget) connection with the divine. She is his dark mirror, in service to higher ideals than anyone else has managed to retain, good or bad, that we've yet seen. There's a kind of grace in this that we could only see in Season Four, and no sooner: a beautiful and terrible revolution. Everything all at once, dark and white, both sides of an imaginary line. Your side, my side, and the side that both hates the conflict and becomes its avatar. The burning woman in her holiness and rage. No Peacekeepers, no Scarrans, just this burning girl, saying her holy No. This is how revolutions happen: people taste this state and realize how good it can feel to be revolting. She's Scorpius as he could be: leaving his fear and hatred behind, turning his face from the flowers and burning with that light. The taint in his rebellion removed, leaving only something terrible and bright. I mean, girlfriend gets *no* credit. This is the show's love letter to her, and all her sisters and brothers. You have to earn it.

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(I promised I wouldn't do this anymore, but it's ridiculous: "Baba O'Reilly" just started on the shuffle. I don't know if that's retarded or what, but you should know that. It's making me laugh. Shuffle's got an effed sense of humor, quaint in its way.)

John turns his face and covers his eyes; Scorpius puts his head down. The Scarrans drop. Her light fells them all, such is its brilliance: One of the Scarrans falls on his face from the stairs. She finally drops to the flowers, spent, and everybody jumps into action. I need a nap too, girl! John and Aeryn try to get Scorpius together; D'Argo -- the only one in attendance who knows what it is, to be subjugated, the only other buffalo soldier -- kneels by Sikozy. He's joined by Chiana, whose race is defined by control and submission. They attend Sikozy in her rest and ascertain she'll be okay. Sikozy lies on the floor among the flowers, silent. Scorpius stands, still staring at the Matriarch. Not getting it. Frothing and growling. "Grasshopper," John says, almost tenderly. "It's time."

Scorpius whips around on John, and growls. Like a beast. He swipes at the flowers like a reaper with his Charrid rifle. "Do the math! It's over." Scorpius turns and aims at John: "I. Do. Not. Lose!" He's nearly incomprehensible. I hate to see him like this. It's not the losing, it's the submission to his anger and the monster that it makes him. After so many years of control and brilliance, of course he's losing his shit in a field of flowers, with his lover Djancaz-bru just a few feet away, recovering from glory. John says he'll be happy to give Scorpius some Losing 101 lessons later, but for now: "You in or out?" Scorpius sighs and finally lowers the gun, sparing one last hiss back at the Matriarch like Dr. Claw: "*Next time, Gadget. Next time.*" With the growly voice and all. D'Argo runs up to the elevator and opens the doors easily. Now that we've gotten the Sikoze set piece out of the way, now that Scorpius has allowed John to be the angel of his better nature just once, returning the favor -- now that John's admitted his grace lies in knowing how to lose -- now that we've seen the stakes and how high they go, we can open the door crazy easy. Scorpius turns off his rifle and trudges back with them, head down.

Noranti stands up slowly in the bioloid chamber, Rygel floating beside her. "Is that him?" He confirms that Stark is indeed sleeping in that glass box, and tells her to open it up. Another Stark, the gross and not awesome one, approaches, walking slowly down the stairs. Tell me Good Stark's got the hottie hair...yes he does. Most excellent. Rygel and Noranti raise the lid on the case together, grunting. The body setting spirit free. Stark lies within, eyes closed. It's a fairy tale. He slowly opens his eye, focusing on the Dominar. "Rygel?" He looks down, shaking his head: "Oh, you lunatic." It's kinda like rubbing a lantern marked "Fucking Annoying," but I love him for all that. "You're green!" he says to Noranti, and she smiles -- not to say primps -- down at him: "How lovely of you to notice." Crazy people are just so...crazy! And now there are four of them in a room at once on a highly-guarded military base!

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"Is nothing sacred?" calls out the tainted Stark from the stairs, shocking Noranti into dropping the lid again. The very question is gross, coming from him. "You wanna deal with Stark, you're gonna have to deal with me." Bad Stark grabs Rygel by the throat, and starts choking him. Shut up, Evil Stark. Gross. "You pompous little Dominar of Nothing! I'm gonna rip your tiny little heart out." If Stark connects you to Heaven, what's this bitch do? Noranti pulls a knife out of her skirts and throws it. Into Bad Stark's eye! Damn! It pokes out of the eyehole in his mask and he turns his head robotically toward her, and then back. Nasty white bioloid junk drips out of his face and mouth. I guess abominations fall under things you're allowed to kill, according to Noranti. I'll co-sign that. Fake images getting dropped left and right; lies turning back into truth, and Stark will be freed from his glass coffin, where he waits to bring his particular blend of awesome and bullshit back into the fold. Rygel gasps, "Thanks, Witch," and she nods. "My pleasure." Mine too! That was rad!

Staleek and Jenek walk around the Imperial Chambers, on comms with Grayza, who is quite quickly turning completely nuts. "Commandant Grayza, see reason," he pleads with her. On the Carrier, Grayza paces as Braca does console stuff. "Reason indicates that you have subverted this conference," she says in a clipped but crazy voice, "and with it, any chance of peace." Staleek calls her ridiculous: "Your vessel arms itself for battle, while we continue to operate under a banner of truce." "*Reason,*"

she snips back, "dictates that I not believe a single word you say." Grayza stares down into her Carrier, steeling herself for total death, as Staleek again asks her to reconsider. "Peacekeeper. Adhere to the name you have chosen for your kind." He turns to Jenek and says if they get hairy, to annihilate them without mercy. Braca finally joins Grayza at her window and asks what the fuck she thinks she's doing. "Pursuing honor, Captain." Braca's like, "...Um? We're at peace, under truce...vastly outnumbered..." She turns on him, with the crazy very strong in her. "...And about to rewrite the course of history. Prepare to launch simultaneous salvos on every weapons system *now!*" I mean, you can see how she works. Peace, as long as you can, but backed into the corner like this? With John and Scorpius out of reach and no way to keep the Cold War going? Burn with revolution. Burn until there's nothing left. She's always thought of herself as the "only" this and the "only" that -- she's the only PK that really gets it, the only officer that wants peace as purely or as pragmatically as she wants. The thing about purity is that it's not sustainable, so if you predicate your identity, the thing that makes you *you*, on something like that, you're pretty much dead when they take it away. Which is all John was trying to warn her about: Where do you go when you can't get out? You change into something else. She can't; all her shapeshifting just made her harder and less flexible. She turned into Grayza, and now she's stuck that way. Braca backs away and turns to the Sergeant on deck, whispering something that you might just think are her orders.

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D'Argo tells John and Aeryn they haven't (n-1) Override Joke, and John's like, "Did you put the key in?" He hisses, "Yes I used the frelling key." John's like, Murphy! Please! "Why do we even bother?" John, shocking everybody, shoots the exterior control panel several times, and sparks shoot out both downstairs and up where the Kalish is still doing the (n-1) deal. He pats at them tenderly but there's no response. D'Argo's like, "Ahem?" John says he's sending a message, and lets the door shut behind him. The Kalish tells Ahkna he's lost his connection to the elevator, thanks to John severing the ties between the bottom and the top. (Remember this for next week: John severs the connection between one end of the shaft and the other, to control it for himself. The key is communication, the key is the same thing it always is: black holes v. wormholes, love v. silence. He destroys the communication and gets control of both sides, turning a wormhole, in this example, into a black hole. I read today that there's new evidence that black holes don't work like they thought, and maybe they'll be re-classified as "MECOs": Magnetospheric Eternally Collapsing Objects. Eternally collapsing: there's a definition I can deal with.)

"Drill's on," says D'Argo, and John steals my Wonkavator joke, asking if D'Argo can drive it. D'Argo's like, "Can you?" And John says no, and D'Argo goes, "Then why ask?" The elevator jerks, tossing everyone around; this is as good a "dancing in the elevator" moment as John and D'Argo are going to get. They rocket up in the shaft, then vector out into solid rock.

A long-neck Scarran approaches Ahkna, saying that there's been an unusual energy discharge in the cavern, and she immediately asks about the status of the Crysterium. "Unknown," but on the other hand they've also lost contact with the strike team. "Crichton?" "...Has activated the drill, and is coring through solid rock. Impossible to predict his destination, my love." (Oh, that must be Pennoch! Hi,

Pennoch! You're so gross-looking!) She's like, "Your destination, *my love*, is a frelling torture station if you don't stop him!" Also, I've been torturing Scorpius but I thought it was okay since we were on a break and I haven't seen you all trilogy. Please do not get all *Maury* about it right now, because he's gone and anyway it didn't mean anything, and I was totally thinking of you the whole time.

John's like, "You at least know how to get us where we're going?" No, D'Argo does not. And in classic, gorgeous John Crichton form, he snaps back, "Oh, then go faster." They all get tossed around and D'Argo smiles: "Here's faster." Drilling and drilling. John calls it a hell of a ride, Chiana laughs, Aeryn smiles. They spin. "Kinda fun, huh?" They whirl and there are crashes and scary jerks as they continue to dig. "Okay, it's no longer a joke." The cuteness quotient of this episode is so high, like record high, that even him saying that is, like, so cute. Pass the champagne, their asses are fine. We're so far into allegory territory at this point, they might just suddenly turn into a giant baby in space.

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Kalish Secretary Vakali and Charrid General Rahzaro, the guys who basically started the riot last week with their chest-bumping bullshit, sit at a table as the Emperor enters. "Protection of the Crysterium was your number-one priority," Staleek begins the slow burn, and Rahzaro nods. "Yes, my lord, but it was not I who gave permission for the access codes." Vakali asks again what the hell he's implying, and the Emperor tells them both to suck it. "Do not give me your excuses!" Captain Jenek comes in, saying Grayza's now just stopped acknowledging altogether, on all frequencies. Staleek credits her for choosing "suicide over failure" and asks how Jenek's positioned for the battle. "They will be accorded every opportunity to cease fire," Jenek says. "Peacekeeper Command will find no fault with our self-defense." Captain Jenek for peace! Awesome! When you're not raping medical patients you're awesome! "Captain Jenek here epitomizes the competence I demand," Staleek growls. "Perhaps you can next assist Minister Ahkna in *her* follies." Jenek nods, and Staleek tells him he can have her job if he nabs John. Jenek bobs and takes off, and Staleek shakes his head at the embarrassed Vakali and Rahzaro, who look away all jealous and ashamed. "Fools." (Cute! This is like the Jane Espenson episode for all time. Everybody's so adorable and quippy!)

Grayza looks over the Command Carrier, which is bathed in red danger light. "Tell me when target acquisitions are complete," she orders, and Braca approaches gingerly -- he's actually *carrying a clipboard* right now -- and looks at her like she's a mean dog. "Ma'am. There is no battle here, ma'am." He keeps his voice very low; so does she. "Why are you so averse to conflict, Captain?" Braca forgets himself: "And *why are you so adverse to...*" His whole body goes *oops* and he gets super-scared. "How dare you?" she shouts. "*Who do you think you are?*" The other Peacekeepers turn and stare. Braca stands straight, staring her down: "Captain Miklo Braca, Officer of the Fleet, Peacekeeper Interplanetary Service." She nods. "Oh. Nobody," she snarks, and fully turns and walks away. He follows, with his hands gone crazy. "Ma'am, you'll *start a war*." She shrugs, as the Sergeant watches carefully. "War is inevitable." Braca shakes his head: "We sail under a flag of truce -- let us leave beneath its protection." I love how she's just completely blowing his mind. It's like when Aeryn found out

nobody actually followed the rules. This is exactly why Braca, who rocks on like every level, never made it past Riker status: he's not fucking *nuts*.

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"Didn't Scorpius tell you?" she asks cruelly, petty and smirking, "A truce with the Scarrans is suicide." He's like, *Girl, I know you did not just bring up Scorpius*, and cuts his eyes at her. "Ah, so the men and women of this vessel must pay for your miscalculation with their lives?" She tells him it's for the greater good, and that they'll all be remembered as heroes. Which, any other PK, *maybe*, but Braca's not hearing it. He jerks his head at the Sergeant and then takes center stage, standing at attention, speaking loudly and clearly. "Commandant Grayza. Under Article Six Rulu, Uniform Code of Admiralty Conduct, Section Nineteen, due to a state of incapacitation of judgment displayed in multiple encounters under stress, I hereby invoke the Transfer of Command and relieve you of duty immediately." She giggles and turns to the Sergeant, calling him forward. "Weapons! Would you be so kind as to shoot this mutinous Captain dead where he stands?" She folds her arms and turns her back on them. I hate to see her go down like this, dude. Acting like a total asshat. Sergeant cocks his weapon and points it, of course, at Grayza: "Sorry, ma'am. Captain Braca has already relieved you of command." She goes dead inside; Braca nods. "Now, let's get this ship out of here."

The Rabrokator drills and drills; inside they spin and flop, and John admits he's never liked Disneyland. (Would have been funnier if he'd said Disneyworld, because of Florida.) Everybody yells and whines as they're jerked around all over the place; John calls out for his father at one point. Yeah. Aeryn's just like, "My *head* hurts." Scorpius sits on the floor holding Sikozu tenderly; Chiana laughs: "Let's go again!" The Rabrokator makes a loud noise and starts to move again, making everybody scream some more and grab hold for another round.

Staleek orders the head bitches that we're just going to disregard Ahkna's status as a Ruling Class Scarran, and also all her orders. They agree, because her track record is not awesome right now; I think this dressing-down of both Grayza and Ahkna so close together has more to do with Sikozu's deal and less with proving something about ladies in power. (Sorry, but ever since [Martha](#) went down that's the first place I go: Is there a man somewhere getting off on this? Do you want to live in a world where that's true? God forbid Oprah ever goes down that hard; the global asshole white-guy orgasm would knock continents apart.) "Besides myself," Staleek growls, "John Crichton is the single most important person on this base. *AM I CLEAR?!*" Have a petal, my darling. You're looking a little insane. "Apprehend him and bring him before me. Now." Suddenly, Emperor Staleek's knocked a-jumble from below as the drill gets close to the War Room. General Rahzaro grabs the Emperor by his pointy elbow and suggests that His Excellency get the fuck out. "It's the elevator," he explains somewhat unnecessarily, dragging him away from the table. Inside the elevator everybody flops around in everybody else's business, as outside, Vakali the Kalish gets tossed all crazy. Though sometimes they are robots with magic powers, on balance it seems that most Kalish, in this informal study we're conducting, do not have a particularly high amount of structural integrity. Rocks fly everywhere.

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Aeryn has fallen against John, of course, and she wriggles around and wonders if it's the surface yet. John's like, "Let's find out!" D'Argo gets ready to open the doors. In the corridor, Charrid Rahzaro directs some guards to get the Emperor clear, and drags some of them back to the conference room, Staleek yelling to keep Crichton alive. Rahzaro nods. He's kind of great right now, just getting it done and getting on with it. Staleek hurries away as the Charrids enter, guns aimed at the elevator from behind the debris, and then they talk about how probably this rogue Wonkavator contains a chewy Crichton center. Like there are other drill machines going nuts elsewhere in the base.

"Why is it not working?" asks John, still stuck inside. D'Argo's like, also nothing is working suddenly, and John starts climbing some hanging wires: "Let's find out where we are." He cracks the hatch and immediately the Charrids open fire, so he drops it and comes back down. "That's no good." Chiana yells and Aeryn's like, "Where are we?" He pictures it and tells her they're in the conference room. AGAIN. Even Aeryn is like, "Seriously?"

"Come out now or die!" screams the General, and inside, Chiana's now convinced that they are laboring under a curse they didn't know about. She asks Aeryn if that's possible, cutely, and Aeryn's like, "Depends on if the elevator will hold." The Charrids shoot, shoot, shoot. Sikozu awakes, looking at Scorpius, and he murmurs that the Rabrokator is "quite strong." D'Argo's already bored, over it the second it started, and he asks if they can go out the bottom hatch. Sikozu shakes her head, saying with all their drilling it'll be like a mile drop at this point. John comms to Sparky and Grandma, as Scorpius crawls past John on the floor. Welcome to John's plans, Grasshopper. Have fun puking.

Rygel comms back to John from near *Lo'La* that the hangar is "crawling" with Scarrans; D'Argo realizes they have the chance to see if she's back to normal. Scorpius lifts off the lower hatch and sets it on the floor beside him, with a clunk; he looks down into the deep and thinks about flowers. "Rygel, are you standing near the ship?" Rygel tells D'Argo he's clear of it, but close. D'Argo calls an order to *Lo'La*, and Rygel ducks behind some barrels as her force field comes up. Rygel yells at a Scarran soldier, calling him a "roshvater," and the Scarran approaches, knocking himself out on some science. "That did it! The guards are down. We did it!"

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Jenek steps out into the Crysterium cavern, discovering the dead strike team and growling. He looks across the field at the Matriarch.

General Rahzaro and the Charrids guard the Rabrokator in the War Room, waiting for reinforcement. He takes off to check on the Emperor and reiterates that they should not let the captured terrorists go running off; the other Charrids cock their weapons, pointing them at the Rabrokator, to wait.

"Grasshopper?" Scorpius looks up at John. "...How important is that mother plant?" Scorpius says he'd trade his life for its destruction, and John asks if he'd cancel his wormhole debt for saving Aeryn. Scorpius laughs and nods: "Of course!" John comms to Rygel, asking if they're onboard *Lo'La* yet. They are. "We're safe," he says, with Noranti and Stark beside him. John's got his bomb again, and he presses something on it. It lights up and begins to beep. Man, John.

John drops the nuclear bomb down the shaft; it falls rapidly out of sight. Even Scorpius is like, the fuck did you just do? "Fixed your little flower problem." Aeryn gapes. "You reactivated it, didn't you?" He nods and gives it about a minute. "And then it explodes?" asks Chiana. "A big explosion?" He nods; the bomb falls down the shaft, beeping. "Oh *God*, we should have voted! All in favor, show of hands," and John holds up his right hand; Aeryn stares at him and Scorpius, and then she and Grasshopper raise their hands, a little. Chiana stands up. Cuteness attack! Can you think of any other episodes like this? It's like *Mission Impossible* and *Gilmore Girls* had a sexy, scary baby! "All opposed?" Chiana raises *both* her hands; D'Argo raises his. "Three to two, Sikozy abstains," he says, and stares down into the hole. Sikozy speaks up for the first time since she made me want to find some battlements and lean up against them, singing: "The concussive pressure must exit through the elevator system..." Meaning this shaft, D'Argo notes. Scorpius thinks probably at this distance, the elevator should protect them; with a *quickness* he replaces the hatch. Aeryn shrugs. "Might work." Sikozy says either way they've got fifteen seconds to find out. General Rahzaro runs back into the ruined War Room with another Charrid, and yells at the Wonkavator. He has no idea whatsoever; it's almost sad. D'Argo crosses the back of the car to stand with Chiana; he puts his arm out and she ducks in, holding him. Sikozy has climbed into Scorpius's lap. Chiana pets D'Argo's hair, and he sighs. Aeryn's on the floor of the car next to John, both of them looking at the hatch quietly.

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John: "Love you."

Aeryn: "...Love you too."

The car in the caverns opens, admitting Jenek and his guy; he informs the Emperor that the Crysteria are intact, and the Matriarch plant has not been harmed. "Our fears were completely groundless."

Sikozy begins to count down, from three: The elevator roof shatters, raining glass down on Jenek's head. Two: the bomb falls into the elevator car; Jenek catches it. John and Aeryn kiss, one last time. Jenek looks down at the bomb: "Hi There!"

Everything is turned to light. The chamber is blue, the shaft is blue, a shock wave travels rapidly upward, rumbling. Things that glow. John and Aeryn kiss harder, press closer. Chiana holds onto D'Argo with all her strength; Sikozy and Scorpius hold each other tighter. The Charrids stare at each other as the War Room begins to rumble.

Lo'La shakes. The concussion wave continues upwards. Up, and up. "What is that?" asks the General, and the Charrids stare around in confusion as the explosion bursts in light around the Rabrokator. The War Room is destroyed by unbearable blue light; John holds her tighter. You can hear the explosion from space. Lights shine from new places, all over the base.

The shaking stops; John pulls back from Aeryn's smile, and Rygel begins to bitch.

Hard: "*Crichton!* What the hezmana just happened? Where *are* you, you fahrbots? Did you blow up the bomb? *How could you blow up the bomb?*" John sighs and smiles.

"You missed the vote."

Noranti, Rygel, and Stark reconnect with Pilot, back finally on *Moya*. Pilot admits he thought he'd never see Stark again; Stark says he always knew they'd be together again. "It is a pleasure to have you aboard," Pilot says, and Noranti grins. Rygel asks

if they are going to starburst again and Pilot says he and *Moya* think four starbursts since the escape is enough. "She's tired, and there's no evidence that anyone is pursuing us." It feels good to be back on *Moya*. Stark figures the Scarrans are still busy back on what's left of Katratzi, and Rygel nods. "They got off easy." Noranti grins, Stark smiles back at her, and she smirks at Rygel. "To celebrate the victory, I shall cook a voluptuous Caspitan haunch stew!" Rygel screams!

Chiana lies next to D'Argo, again, finally, under a fur blanket, arms and legs askew, giggling happily. She gently rubs her cheek with a piece of his hair, stretches; they sigh contentedly. She moves her leg under the covers, making D'Argo laugh, and then they just laugh and smile together for awhile. "More," she says, curling one leg around, and he agrees, happily: "More." And they do. And they are.

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Sikozu stands in Scorpius's chamber; he asks how long it takes for her to recover. "I don't know," she admits. "I've never done this before." Never burned. She walks across to him, turning his face to her with one finger, reaching up to kiss him. He leans into the kiss, and she moves around, kissing his face on the other side. He turns away, but she turns his face back to hers again; this time, he kisses back. It's not even creepy anymore.

But where's the Downer Tag? Oh, here it is. John leans back against their bed, drinking from a flask. Aeryn lies behind him on the bed, propped on a pillow. John's like, "Stark, huh." She hums at him. He gestures with his booze. "Everything old is new again. Except, the old thing's getting really old." He takes another drink and sets the cup aside. He's staring out at nothing. He *needs* to take a goddamn nap.

"Hi, honey," he chuckles sadly. "Guess what I did at work today? I wore a bomb. A nuclear bomb, in a field of flowers." He closes his eyes and sighs; Aeryn turns to look at him.

"I could get lucky. Tomorrow I could have a bigger bomb." She raises up on her elbows, staring now.

"I could kill *more* people. Maybe they'll be *innocent* people. Children, maybe." She watches him, and he swallows, hollowed out. He finally looks up at her, and she reaches out to touch his hair. He closes his eyes, under her hand, as she strokes his tired head. He lowers his face into the crook of his elbow, hiding his face. She rests her hand in his hair. He laces his fingers with hers. He begins to sob.